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UNIVERSITY PRESS
126 Buckingham Palace Road, London SW1W 9SD

The Times Literary Supplement

May 23 1986 Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX

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Cover picture By Alastair Gray with apologies to Dürer

Criticisms of life, voices of protest

George Steiner

TOM PAULIN (Editor)
The Faber Book of Political Verse
481pp. Faber. £17.50 (paperback, £8.95).
0271 139477

Literature is political to its roots. The literary act cannot be separated from the ordering perceptions, witness and argument about life which we call "political thought", or from the translation of that argument into the codes (themselves rhetorically structured) of political action. The interaction of the poetic and the political is eloquent from the start. The oldest poems we have in the Western inheritance, the songs of Miriam and of Deborah, are loud with the politics of survival. There is no more poignant, closely argued meditation on the perils of national illusion and the ambiguities of defeat - the victor also stands in danger - than that voiced in Aeschylus' *Pericles*. The public lyricism of the *Aeneid* is animated at every point by the tragic politics of exile, by the cost in violence exacted by homecoming. Plato's inter-secular quarrel with the poets, he himself being a master of the music and dramatic pulse of discourse, tells of the inevitable intimacy between the life of letters and that of the state. Aristotle's poetics and rhetoric are a deliberate attempt to make that kinship therapeutic, to bring into civic harness the nocturnal, potentially anarchic compulsions of fiction.

What gives to politics in literature their specific force is the relation of the conceptual, paraphrased levels of statement to those of form. The political message or critique - whether conservative or radical - in a piece of verse, in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* or *Ibsen's Enemy of the People*, can be abstracted, literally "read out" of the formal aspects, metrical, documentary, dramatic, of the given text. It is just such instances which, however, fail to exert the compelling and enduring poetics of the political. For an aesthetic achievement is by its very existence as a willful form, a counter-statement to the extant condition of things.

It is by virtue of its poetic means and architecture that Sophocles' *Antigone* makes intelligible, but resistant to programmatic exploitation, a politics of limitation, of questioning provisionality and legislative patience in the face of non-negotiable conflicts. The pessimistic, stoic politics of Dostoevsky's *Devils* or Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* are of a complication and compassion denied to political theory and political writings as such, just because they are brought to life wholly within the stylistic and compositional process of the fiction. It is this fusion with imaginative form, this resistance to unambiguous, partisan excision, which makes *Animal Farm* a greater, if more opaque, text than *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

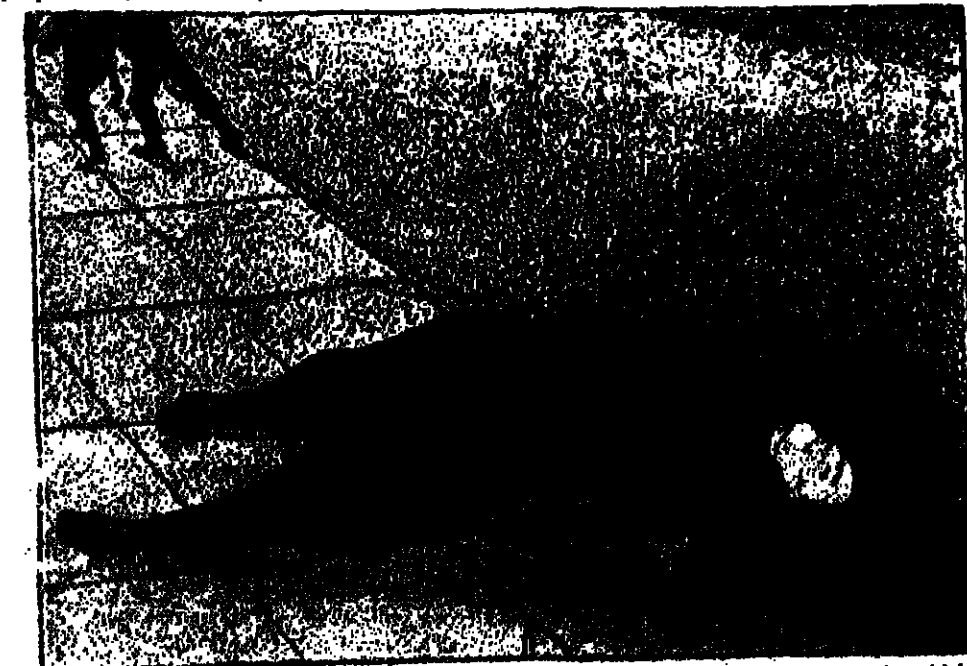
The politics of literature, its "criticism of life" (the Arnoldian phrase remains lapidary), come to us both through what is being said and through the ripples to things as they are, through the rebellion, implicit in the aesthetic form itself, against material, socio-historical constraints. To write a serious poem (epic, drama, novel) is to say "No" to that in man's and woman's estate that the writer deems trivial, wasteful, unjust or barbaric. As Elias Canetti often reminds us, the statement by a writer that his poem or novel or play, had it been better, ought to have stopped this war or that massacre, is not empty megalomania. It is, rather, a talismanic pointer to the imperative humanity, to the claims on totality, which underlie the act of poetic creation.

It is, one would suppose, the elucidation of such categories that would concern the preface to an anthology of "political verse", the more so when that preface and anthology are the work of a poet. Tom Paulin thanks Craig Raine, his editor at Faber and Faber, for providing "the polemical introduction". Perhaps some in-house merriment is at work; perhaps we are to take the ample prologue as a practical joke played by a robust, progressive, deliberately rough-spoken author on what he sees as his stuffy, prudish and politically reactionary editor and publisher. But even if it is meant to be a barbed jest - and why not? - it must none the less be understood: for it determines the contents of the book.

Our current sense of political literature, notably in English, is, Paulin says, the direct result

"of the aristocratic, hierarchical, conservative tradition which Arnold and T. S. Eliot have floated as the major cultural hegemony in these islands". Abetted by Edmund Burke and by "that reactionary theologian, C. S. Lewis", our educators, critics and scholars have persuaded generations of Englishmen that "poems exist in a timeless vacuum or a sound-proof museum, and that poets are gifted with an ability to hold themselves above history, rather like skylarks or weather satellites". Together, Matthew Arnold and T. S. Eliot "ensured that the magic of monarchy and superstition permeated English literary criticism and education like a syrupy drug". The republican tradition, that of Bunyan, of Burns, of Milton above all, has been passed under official silence or sneered at. A "rich proletarian tradition" which looks to prelapsarian Adam, a tradition which can be "witty, tough, idealistic, and resolute with a sense of egalitarian integrity", is the actual "groundbase, the deep tidal pull, which underlies much political verse written in 'higher' or more 'official' modes". Fortunately, according to this view, the work of a small number of brave souls, such as Christopher Hill, E. P. Thompson and David Nor-

runs from the egalitarian doggerel sung by the followers of Cade's rebellion all the way to the work-songs and pop-anarchy of the present. Though Christopher Hill markedly, I believe, overstates his case, he has made it absolutely clear that Milton's involvement with republican thoughts and sentiments, his awareness of contemporary apocalyptic and millenarian movements, are vital to his genius and to his poetry. Paulin's almost obsessive sneers at T. S. Eliot do have their logic. Much in that high and feline personage remains either undecipherable or frankly off-putting. The focus on the persistently political and insurgent character of Irish writing, on the libertarian irreverence of the Scottish vein, is surely right, as is Paulin's unease about the deeply riven quality of Yeats's politics and of the uses to which Yeats's political poetry can be put. I would, moreover, be the last to quarrel with Paulin's estimate of the dynamics of literature, of poetry especially, in the so-called Marxist world. The genius, the politicized genius of Russian poetry runs unbroken from Pushkin to Akhmatova and Brodsky; a good deal of the prose fiction being produced east of the Elbe is of a human pressure and invention which only



A revolutionary student, shot by an army patrol, lies dying in the gutter; a drawing by an unknown artist, which appeared in *Zetel* ("Spectator"), a weekly satirical underground journal published in St Petersburg in 1905-6. It is reproduced from *The Artist as Reporter* by Paul Hogarth (224pp, with approximately 250 illustrations. Gordon Fraser. £25. 0 86092 084 4).

brook, is refuting the "bland, unhistorical, insidiously tendentious readings" not only of Milton, but of our literary past as a whole.

But, sadly, it would seem that political verse is virtually a lost art in England now. Terminal rot set in, Paulin argues, with Auden's espousal of "the monarchist or Anglo-Catholic" position; Geoffrey Hill's is a plaintive lament "for the past's 'Weightless magnificence' ruined by the recent concrete of the Welfare State"; Charles Tomlinson and Donald Davie now support "the reactionary Anglicanism of *Poetry Nation Review*". It is in the Irish and the Scottish traditions, in Paul Muldoon, in some poems by Seamus Heaney, in Hugh MacDermid, that the voice of embittered justice and protest can be heard. And it is in the "cold, closed societies" of the totalitarian world, of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union in particular, that major poetry has assumed the life-giving obligations of relevance and of social criticism. "Like prisoners tapping out messages along the heating pipes in a cell block", Polish, Czech or Russian poets "speak to us in cipher from an underground culture we in the West have difficulty in comprehending, or which we can too readily twist to our own purposes". There, Paulin says, the true poet "is woken at dawn like a man being arrested or a prisoner about to be shot". Ours is, very largely, a poetry of more or less complacent valediction - "Larkin's lament for lost imperial glory is a deliberately drab, formal gesture of futility and resignation" - or the articulation of a purely personal, lyric credo, fastidiously estranged from the realities of social and political existence.

There are important elements in Paulin's manifesto - and I use that word in a positive, technical sense - which should elicit assent. Secondary schooling and the academy have often ignored the strong current of populist, radically satiric and protesting literature which

South Africa and Latin America rival. It is a real if dread privilege to have the KGB for one's readers. Nor is it altogether easy to affirm Paulin's assessment of English poetry just now; much of it is small beer; much of it does turn away from what is, palpably, a critical stage in the life of the diminished nation. Narcissus gazes into a drained pool.

The difficulties arise when one would submit to courteous and fruitful questioning the dubious aspects of Paulin's thesis. The language in which it is urged is slovenly (those "floating hegemonies") and aggressive. The simplifications are numbing.

Paulin must know the discriminations which need to be made between the organicist constitutionalism of Burke, Arnold's endeavours to give to the concept of the canonic a secular re-insurance, and Eliot's strategic re-arrangements of the literary past so that this past might generate and validate the truly radical innovations in modernism. Surely Paulin is aware that the New Criticism, far from being non-political, in fact sprang from the agrarian and patrician reveries of a group of politically unreconstructed American southern poets and critics and their Fugitive Manifesto. Why does he not cite the tough-minded, astute application and ironization of Marxism, much beyond his own range, in Empson's *Some Versions of Pastoral*? It is not a mandarin conspiracy which assigns to the conservative camp the majority of serious political poetry and fiction, or which makes the elusive politics of Shakespeare what they are. It is that central affinity to order, the organic metaphor which informs both aesthetic composition *per se* and certain primary modes of political conservatism and pessimism (in major "reactionary" poets these two are almost invariably knit). If so much of classic resources and appeal, "elitist" in its technical resources and appeal, this is very obviously because literature of a more concentrated, self-conscious sort will

always draw on more complex and richly referential levels of discourse and understanding. Motions of spirit which aim at perfection are, as Spinoza reminds us, difficult.

Nowhere in Paulin's preface do we find any attempt at a definition of what constitutes politics in poetry. Nowhere is there any attempt to register the depth and delicacy of the issues raised by the inter-penetrations of the fictive and the political, of *poiesis* and programme. Poetry can describe political events. It can articulate general or very particular political wishes and fears. It can, as Paulin rightly observes, be trenchantly political in its refusal of any overt political content or allusion. Some political verse will seek to make of its metrical and prosodic shapes a figuration of the relevant political stance (the revolutionary hymn, the underground epigram). In other cases, on the contrary, the performative genre is, unconsciously or ironically, at odds with the explicit political argument (Coleridge and Brecht use this counterpoint to vivid effect). Paulin proposes no classifications. He offers no methodological access to his selections. The consequence is a miscellany of rhyme with little reason.

The very first selection, the Ugolino episode from the *Inferno*, highlights one's perplexities. Why start there rather than, say, with Horace, Juvenal or Virgil? The Ugolino piece is famous for its grim pathos. It happens not to be "political" in any deeper sense. Paulin's choice may have been motivated by the fact that Seamus Heaney is the translator of this all-too-familiar purple passage. Its horrific quality may also point to Paulin's often sensationalist view of political struggle. This extract does not, as would, for instance, the *Cacchagula cantos* (*Paradiso*, XV, XVI), illustrate the stimulation, the innervation of Dante's universal vision by the pressure of concrete, local, partisan politics. It is precisely this innervation which led the young Georg Lukács to argue that there is more of the reality of daily social life in the *Paradiso* than in the "prepotent opulence" of Shakespeare. Again, Paulin's spacious selections from Wordsworth's *Prelude* are welcome, but they are essentially descriptive of historical-political events; the raging disenchantments of Wordsworth's politics are to be found in the late sonnets on censorship, on capital punishment; Wordsworth's most compelling fusion of poetic form and inward politics occurs in his meditations on duty and the interplay between public and private sorrows at the moment of his brother's death. Paulin's rehabilitation of Clough as a political poet is admirable. Why the omission of those truly major political outcries, Coleridge's odes to France and to "The Departing Year", or that subtlest of counter-political political poems "Frost at Midnight"? It is right that Clare should figure emphatically in these pages. The inert, hectoring slabs of Hugh MacDermid are harder to justify. And what is astounding is the total excision of Thomas Hood; the absence of "The Song of the Shirt" from an anthology of this kind is merely perverse. At other points, one is bewildered: in what way is Wyatt's exquisite "They flee from me..." a political poem?

Paulin includes a number of texts out of foreign languages. Heine is one of the most prodigal and fascinating of political poets; he is represented by a feeble squib. The political lyrics, verse-satires, reflections on the formal and substantive dialectic of poetic and political speech in Brecht are, perhaps, the crux of his inspiration. He appears here in a single, embarrassingly strident agitprop piece (no translator marked). One is grateful to Paulin for his selections from Mandelstam, Pasternak, Zbigniew Herbert and Enzensberger. And it is far too easy a game to make addenda to another man's syllabus. But in two cases, omission becomes very nearly decisive.

Paulin has insightful things to say of the genius of Marvell's political verse. He would, one imagines, agree that "An Horatian Ode" is the most authoritative, critically inextinguishable political poem in the language. European literature has produced two, and perhaps only two, lyric-political verse-texts of wholly comparable stature. These are Marvell's "Fifth of May" and Pushkin's "Bronze Horseman". Fine translations into English are available, notably of the Pushkin. Their interaction with Marvell in the mind of the reader, in the fabric of

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our culture, are of the first moment. Neither appears in a "Book of Political Verse" which expends pages on Egan O'Rahilly, Brother Will Hairston and Ebenezer Elliott (these being arguable and innovative choices). But the absence of Manzoni and Pushkin is not, I sense, fortuitous. It is not so much that those great poems communicate a troubled intimation of the mystery of all political action, in a vein which Paulin may find profoundly inimical. After all, so does Marvell, whom he so finely puts forward. It is rather, I tentatively suggest, that Manzoni and Pushkin internalize almost totally the political content, that the strength and possible application of their politics come wholly from within the infinitely complex, resistant fabric of the specific linguistic-prosodic process. In the event of a further edition, will Paulin reconsider?

Anthologies turn on a difficult-to-define matter of trust: between the selector and his material, between these two and the reader. Paulin's heart is, often justly and angrily, in the right place. Reflecting on the tasks of true poetry in the totalitarian systems, he speaks movingly of "a mnemonic compulsion to pre-

serve the past and the dead". Yet the very poet-editor who has written these words, in his own "translation", an incredibly ragged, brutalized "version" of some of the *biographies* which André Chénier composed on the very eve of his execution. That neither "nor" nor "a comic farce" nor "Who's getting it in the day?" figure in the original fragment is one thing. What is worse is that the translator does not perceive that this register and idiom are entirely and precisely excluded not only from Chénier's style, but from the tenor, despite the perception of death in Arcadia which constitutes the very nature of his politics. Where, in such a gross and seemingly casual appropriation, is that "preservation of the past and the dead" which Paulin so justly commands, and which is, indeed, of the essence of a humanist politics? It is discrepancies of this kind, in the impatient cutting of corners, in respect of the overall issue of the life of politics inside language, and of the particular example gathered, that makes trust difficult. One does the book not challenged, but at a loss. Another Faber anthology comes to mind: *The Risk Bag*.

A modernist retrieved

Jenny Penberthy

MINA LOY
The Last Lunar Baedeker
Edited by Roger L. Conover
434pp. Manchester: Carcanet. £7.95.
085635 4589

With Carcanet's publication of *The Last Lunar Baedeker*, the English-born poet Mina Loy returns home. Her absence began in 1903 when as a twenty-one-year-old painter and draughtswoman she opted for an itinerant life on the Paris-Florence-New York axis of the international avant-garde. In the mid-1910s her first poems appeared in magazines of experimental writing; revolution in the visual arts had found affinities with new kinds of poetry. She made a precarious living as a designer of hats, dresses, scenography and lampshades — accessories, one might say, to her lapidary crafting of poems.

It is not surprising that few signs of local literary influences appear in the work of this peripatetic artist. "I have no idea what English is," she wrote, "but I am intensely aiming at pure language." The results are short-lined, slow-paced, meticulous compositions that align aural and visual symmetries and simultaneously evoke a cerebral, abstract response. Single words register trans-cultural, etymological accretions — a concentrated history of their making: "In some / Prenatal plagiarism / Poetical buffoons / Caught tricks / From archetypal pantomime / Stringing emotions / Looped aloft."

It was Mina Loy's achievement that led Ezra Pound to revise his poetic lexicon to include the notion of *logopoia*: "poetry that is akin to nothing but language, which is a dance of the intelligence among words..." (*How To Read*). The American modernists were quick to count her among their number. She was published in the landmark issues of American magazines: the "Exile" issue of the *Little Review*; the "Waste Land" issue of the *Dial*; the "291" issue of Stieglitz's *Camera Work*. In 1923, at his short-lived Contact Press, Robert McAlmon, publisher of Gertrude Stein, Hemingway and William Carlos Williams, produced the first of the two Mina Loy collections to be published in her lifetime. Both Eliot and Pound are indebted to her. The only full-length study of her poetics, Virginia M. Koussis's *Mina Loy: American modernist poet*, finds that Eliot borrows from Loy for the "tortured reader passage of *The Waste Land*, Pound's "Homage to Sextus Propertius" very likely derives as much of its polysyllabic eccentricity from Mina Loy as it does from *L'Allegre*.

In 1926 Ivor Winters described Mina Loy and William Carlos Williams as "the two living poets who have the most... to offer the younger generation of American writers." But Mina Loy has almost disappeared from literary memory. Not even historians of the avant-garde or the feminist literary movement

have saluted her provocative contribution. Literary critics might use the opportunity provided by *The Last Lunar Baedeker* to consider the English impetus behind modernist poetry, a tradition often regarded as American. Pound, H. D., Laura Riding and Mina Loy, for a start, learned more than rancour from their English sojourns.

In this almost complete collection of poems and prose, the editor Roger Conover provides welcome sanctuary for Mina Loy's published and unpublished writings, hitherto scattered between Paris, Dominica and *The Boney*, New York. His extensive, fascinating introduction and chronology amply fill the biographical lacunae.

She was an adherent of Futurism until its fascism repelled her and became the butt of an ornate, icy satire. Included in the collection are an elucidation of the more labyrinthine aspects of Gertrude Stein's work, a "Feminist Manifesto", and other polemical writings whose vigorous typographical innovations pre-date E. E. Cummings. In New York in 1917, where a daily newspaper had named her the prototypical "Modern Woman", she met Arthur Cravan, boxer, poet, nephew to Oscar Wilde and self-styled Dadaist. Their brief, successful marriage, halted by his never-explained disappearance in Mexico, is the source of much of her saddest writing and perhaps a part of the explanation for her retreat from literary stardom. She continued to write but without apparent ambition to publish. All ten of the poems which appeared in her last thirty-five years were solicited. A late poem, "Letter of the Unliving" ends: "Leave me / my final library / of memory's languor — / my Ophelia / on Lethe". Against this impulse ran an uncompromising intrepidity of spirit that goes some way towards explaining her neglect.

John Tripp's *Passing Through* (Bridgend: Poetry of Wales Press. £3.95. 907476 35 X) is aptly titled: Much given to travel, the author suffers a loss of fireproof through staidness. His sequence of Irish poems wears a frozen touristic glamour, as if sponsored by Bord Fáilte. The sentiments are hopelessly decent but the effect is patronizing and reflects the author's own sense of political defeat. Somebody will have to write effectively about the bomb, but "Cardiff", August 6, 1981, seems implicitly to accept that here his imagination is as decisively shut as the factories of Tripp's native Wales. The most (un)travelling piece is "Singing Of", dispiritingly about the poet thankful for the abolition of workhouses (a strange gratitude). The language itself capitulates: to the D.F.S.S. (the wishes that Tripp would offer a fuller definition of the equally grim but more inward-looking toughness on in "Catching the Night Ship") and "White Flag", where spiritual language generates a verbal life that is almost disorienting.

Ambiguities of state

Charles Townshend

SHABTAI TEVETH
Ben-Gurion and the Palestinian Arabs: From peace to war
234pp. Oxford University Press. £17.50.
019 503562 3
RONALD W. ZWEIFG
Britain and Palestine During the Second World War
198pp. Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer. £26.
086193 200 5

The tolls of Britain in Palestine between 1917 and 1948 provided an awful lesson in the fallibility of states, even — perhaps above all — those credited with special aptitude in statecraft. How did a great power with an unparalleled wealth of international and imperial experience come to adopt so egregiously impolitic a policy as the Balfour Declaration? How was it that the irreducible hostility of Arabs to Zionism, and the ineluctable alienation of opinion in the most vital strategic region, were not foreseen? Or, if (as some thought) Britain was ready to risk the alienation of Arab opinion from the West in order to guarantee a "Western" implant in the Middle East, why did it not back Zionism to the hilt? The argument in Britain's defence, that these great issues could not have been recognized in 1917, has always seemed shaky. It would certainly be strengthened if a similar myopia could be attributed to the man who, in the British view, was the most radical exponent of the drive towards the establishment of an exclusionist Jewish state, David Ben-Gurion.

Shabtai Teveth's book sets out to show that in fact Ben-Gurion arrived at such radicalism later than is usually thought. Before the 1930s he was a pragmatist with flexible ideas about institutional structures to accommodate Jewish and Arab outlooks. The evidence for this accommodating stance is plentiful, if not altogether unambiguous: not merely his resonant declaration that Zionism must not cost a single Arab child its rights, but his lengthy efforts to build a mixed Arab-Jewish trade-union organization, and his repeated attempts to negotiate with Arab nationalists (including the most resolute opponent of Zionism, the Mufti of Jerusalem) about autonomous political development within some sort of federal arrangement incorporating all the Middle Eastern Arab states.

Teveth conveys with many vivid touches the evolution of Ben-Gurion's view of the Arabs from the moment of his arrival in Palestine from Russia — physically borne in the arms of an Arab porter — through to the great re-evaluation of the 1930s: the Arab rebellion, the 1939 White Paper, and above all the onset of the Holocaust. He does not pretend that this view was consistent, and he is an alert critic of the tensions or contradictions within many of Ben-Gurion's attempts to preserve the aura of Zionism as a socialist mission to improve the quality of life for all inhabitants of *eretz Israel*. Yet the bewildering shifts of policy which

Teveth records imply a still less charitable interpretation of Ben-Gurion's programme than he seems to wish to present. This is that Ben-Gurion's "pragmatism" did not stem from real open-mindedness, but represented a series of tactical manoeuvres designed to compensate for the physical weakness of the *Yishuv* — the Jewish community of Palestine — until such time as the question could be resolved by military means. Teveth points to this conclusion in his epilogue, but his text presents a more optimistic impression. It does not record, for instance, that as early as 1919, before the first serious communal riots of 1920 and 1921, Ben-Gurion declared "There is no solution to this question! No solution! There is a gulf and nothing can fill this gulf. It is possible to resolve the conflict between Jewish and Arab interests only by sophistry."

The real question is whether Ben-Gurion's subsequent efforts at resolution were anything more admirable than sophistry. Where they, at least, based on unconscious rather than deliberate illusions? Here Teveth's account is particularly interesting, because many of Ben-Gurion's inconsistencies exactly mirror those of the British government. Both shared the belief that the Arabs had no prima facie claim to rule Palestine, because they were unable to develop its economic potential. Both believed that there was no Palestinian Arab national consciousness, and thought that because the Arabs occupied such vast territories elsewhere they should not be concerned about Palestine. Both assumed that the *Yishuv* was dependent on British support. As befitted an inhabitant of Palestine, though, Ben-Gurion was more aware than the British Government that there was an Arab question, and more resourceful in imagining possible resolutions. His socialist perspective might have offered the most promising of these, yet it too was riven by contradiction. He swung back and forth between theoretical exaltation of the fellah and practical acceptance of the effendi. He recognized that any approach towards the South African model of racial separation would be disastrous, yet had to insist on a policy of separate employment (*Avodah Ivrit*) so as to ensure that there would be Jewish workers as well as employers.

The reasons for this were primarily national, if not racial. Ben-Gurion believed that a people's title to their homeland was a function of the labour invested in it. "The land can be earned only by building, by the sweat of one's brow." Racial, too, was the astonishing fall-back view which he developed during his searches as an exile in New York — that the fellahin were in fact descendants of the indigenous rural population of Palestine before the Arab conquest — thus not Arabs at all. This illusion demonstrated more than anything else Ben-Gurion's ultimate aim of securing assimilation rather than co-operation. In so far as he saw the possibility of a partnership, it was an unequal one in which the Arabs would recognize the technical and political superiority of the Jews. Hence his reluctance to concede the existence of a Palestinian national consciousness. The Arabs must remain under-

developed. Teveth locates the final "turning point" in Ben-Gurion's estimate of Palestinian consciousness in the Arab rebellion of 1936, but there were so many other crucial points (such as Yahya Effendi's parting remark in 1915, or Ben-Gurion's judgment that the 1929 events aimed at "the destruction of the *Yishuv*", or his evaluation of the death of Sheikh Izz al-Din al-Qassam in November 1935) that it is hard to accept the implied evolution. The real evolution seems to have occurred less in Ben-Gurion's analysis of the Arabs than in the steady enlargement of the *Yishuv*. Ben-Gurion's moderate notion of a "state" ("we have no intention of dominating others. When we speak of a state, we mean two things: that others not dominate us, and that we not live in anarchy") may be thought to give some colour to the idea that the British could not have foreseen the pace at which Zionists would pursue the creation of a Jewish state rather than merely a "national home". But again, other formulations, such as that Palestine should become "as Jewish as England is English", show a total commitment to the ideology of the modern nation state. Arab fear of Zionism may have been exaggerated, but it was not unfounded.

By the late 1930s it was at last becoming clear to the British that they could not foster beneath their imperial suzerainty a hybrid political structure in Palestine. Both communities demanded effective self-government, and the only feasible mechanism was partition. This realization spread only slowly and unevenly through the British administration. Ronald Zweifg's scholarly monograph ably documents the internal strains and shifts of power after the 1939 White Paper. Churchill, then out of office, denounced the 1939 policy as a betrayal of Britain's obligations under the Balfour Declaration and the League of Nations Mandate. The Colonial Office and the Palestine Govern-

ment had done with this view. Britain, they said, could no longer afford the Zionist interpretation of the Declaration. The Mandate, along with the League itself, was a dead letter. Britain had to build a political structure consonant with its own ideas and interests, since it had proved impossible to give effect to local ideas. Opposition from both sides was in fact the best evidence of rectitude. What was needed was firmness. Palestine military intelligence predicted encouragingly that "If the Government remains firm in its policy it is probable that the local population will swing more or less rapidly to the side of law and order." What could be more British than this pious aspiration?

Unfortunately, firmness in this case entailed forcibly excluding from Palestine the Jewish refugees from Nazi Europe. The unlooked-for international catastrophe, together with the return of Churchill to power, subjected British policy to enormous strain. None the less, the Colonial Office and the Palestine High Commissioner, MacMichael, held out with surprising tenacity. They are the villains of Dr Zweifg's piece. The reader can be in no doubt where the author's sympathies lie, though he maintains an exemplary detachment in handling such ghastly ironies as the Colonial Office proposal to build concentration camps for illegal Jewish immigrants in July 1939, with the strict injunction that they "must not be comfortable".

In the end, the British were the victims of their own political culture. Nowhere is the gulf between British assumptions and overseas realities more starkly etched than in the half-hopeful, half-desperate remark of Colonial Secretary Malcolm MacDonald, "What I wanted in Palestine almost more than anything else is a really good moderate leader, who will rival the Mufti in ability and influence". The problem was precisely that British moderation was no longer a saleable political commodity.

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Pigeons, pit and passion

Valentine Cunningham

STAN BARSTOW
Just You Wait and See
214pp. Michael Joseph. £9.95.
07181 26955

A *Kind Of Loving* wasn't just a flash in the pan, but it has very nearly proved to be. Of all the mid-century realists whose company he keeps, Stan Barstow comes closest to being a one-novel man. *Just You Wait and See* garners its title from the optimistic wartime song about bluebirds appearing over the white cliffs of Dover. The wryness of this musical reminiscence is confined to Barstow's central character Ella Palmer, who is married to one lad in the RAF but in love with another who is in the Army, and so is destined to a future of the lovesick blues. An unconscious irony also attends Barstow's writing: his novels don't change all that much; nor will they, it seems.

What Barstow is good at, though, ought not to be dismissed with the glibness of one recent reviewer's cruel gibe about uneconomic pits that are ripe for closing down. Why, one wonders, should radio and television drama be thought of as more acceptable media than the novel for the kind of stolid and predictable, staunchly particular and authentic northern stories Barstow still goes in for? The Palmer family of this novel, coal-mining people, inhabitants of a quiet street in a quiet town, natural and lifelong Labour voters, keen on their booze, raucous at Christmas time, united in awe and scorn for the posh ways sister Ada has picked up from her middle-class employers, are the decent continuers of that line of ordinary people in solid provincial novels built on Rutherford-Bennett-Priestley lines. Southern bourgeois critics have always been a bit put out by this tradition, but have never come up with valid reasons for liking stories about Home Counties selfhood better.

To be sure, Barstow has never shed the cumbersome quality that marks the provincial realists — Walter Brierley it might be, or Lewis Jones, or even Lawrence himself. If Barstow can spell something out rather than just touch it in, he will do so. Old Sudden Palmer's conversations with Mr Keighley, the summer lodger, about the coming war go informatively on and on. So does the extract from Churchill's post-Dunkirk speech about fighting on the landing fields. You can rely on Barstow to reproduce a very full stanza on the subject of hanging out on the washing on the Stegried Line. The plotting, too, can creak. The convention of fire and explosion down 'pit needs more justification than Barstow is prepared to give it, and melodramatic twists of fortune — Ella, fresh from her soldier-lover's bed, bumping into the husband she thought was still away training in Canada as he emerges from, yes, Workhouse (Ginzel) — occur a little too frequently. As if it were a play for television, this novel relies mainly on dialogue, so that the characters' inner lives, their feelings, even the mental life of Ella herself, are far too often left to be guessed

at from the very lengthy verbal exchanges. The resulting sense of distance and casual skating over surfaces is very different from modernism's conscious play with enigma and unknowability.

And yet, when all one's complaints are registered, there remains much here that is rather fine. Barstow has, for instance, the knack that Harold Heslop or Walter Greenwood had, of opening up by the use of a single phrase whole vistas of concealed, suppressed working-class life, as when Ella's brothers talk about "feeling the weight coming down" — that moment during night shifts when you hear the earth over your head bearing down on the pit-props. Excellent, too, are the moments at which the sincerity and canniness of regional and working-class people are asserted against the scorn of their critics or their betters.

The taut and compassionate accounts of sexual need and deed that this novel gives are far

from the Barstow course — he has always been good at the grope in the back row of the cinema or the quick one in the field. Even more arresting in this book is his capacity for the turn of plot or event that genuinely grants a surprise, neither gratuitous nor gothic. Ella, having a bath modestly behind a sheet hung up in the kitchen while Walter yearns for a look and eventually takes one, makes one such occasion; all the appearances of Mrs Mildred Sadler-Browne, the Palmers' odd next-door neighbour, shooter of pigeons, mysterious grass-widow with lesbian touches, are similarly expansive. And so too, above all, is the novel's balladic ending, with Walter watching from the communal bedroom window as the soldiery, including Ella's lover, march away to the railway station and to war. Just one of these moments would be enough to grant *Just You Wait and See* more than passing interest, and keep banality at bay.

The rot in Samoa

Jim Crace

ALBERT WENDT
The Birth and Death of the Miracle Man
176pp. Viking. £9.95.
07182586

The anthropologist and "Ceremonial Virgin", Margaret Mead, has provided the Western world with its most enduring and (if Derek Freeman's recent reassessment is to be accepted) fictional image of Samoa: a coconut Eden free of anxiety, guilt and jealousy, jauntily impervious to the demands of God, Government and money. It was a view encouraged by the writers and painters, from Melville to Gauguin, who visited and drew inspiration from the Polynesian islands. For them, the islanders (in the words of Robert Louis Stevenson, whose body is buried on Samoa's Mount Vaea) were "very genteel, very songful, very agreeable, very good-looking, chronically spoiling for a fight".

Many of the stories in Albert Wendt's collection, *The Birth and Death of the Miracle Man*, have been previously published in New Zealand and Australia, but they now appear for the first time in Britain. They provide a rare opportunity to encounter a Samoan writing about his own people and, incidentally, showing Mead and Stevenson to be wrong or, at least, outdated in almost every detail. ("Birthdays are of little account in Samoa," asserts Mead in the opening line of *The Education of the Samoan Child*; Wendt devotes two stories to the importance of birthdays.)

Wendt's Samoans are inhabitants of Paradise Lost: coconuts have given way to meals of stewed tinned herrings and saveloys, communal *siva* dancing has been replaced by visits to the Tivoli Cinema (now showing *The Blob*), and young Samoan men, dressed in imported jeans rather than the more appropriate and traditional *lavalava*, dream not of esteem within the family and the village but of a work-

permit in New Zealand or a trip to that only Eden genuinely free from anxiety, guilt and jealousy, Disneyland. Their wealth no longer comes from the fields and plantations of the off-shore shoals but from monthly remittances from dutiful and drunken sons in Otago, the Polynesian suburb of Auckland. Young people are indifferent to or contemptuous of *fa'a Samoa*, the traditional way of life in which the family subdues the individual; but they are uncinically obsessed with everything imported by the *papalagi* or "sky bursters", as white people are called. A poor harvest is an inconvenience, but an examination failure in the schools, run largely, it seems, by *papalagi* spinsters, is life's greatest setback.

In these dozen stories, Wendt has delineated much of the wreckage of the West's "fatal impact" on the islands of Samoa, but regrettably he displays little aptitude for constructing narratives which invade and illustrate the issues he raises. The substance of his tales is swamped by his many stylistic affectations: an eccentric and inappropriate use of multiple parentheses, for example, and a professorial fondness for stretching and overloading his sentences ("The profound Paafotoga eased his wise presence into our contemplation...").

More disruptive is the insistent use of Samoan words and phrases which, though translated in a glossary, interrupt the narrative rhythm of the book without enriching our understanding of the island culture: "We have only about thirty *matua*, and we meet as a council, a *fono*, at our *tu'ua's* main fale, every Thursday morning." If the three unexplained words here are universal enough to be rendered in the glossary as *head of the family*, *orator and house*, then what can be the advantage of not translating them within the text?

One story, however, is more cunningly and efficiently contrived. "I Will Be Our Saviour from the Bad Smell" is a powerfully inventive squib at the expense of imported *papalagi* culture, from Christianity to corned beef. A Samoan village is invaded by an unidentified odour, "a thick transparent syrup... the whole area occupied (that was the appropriate description) by the Bad Smell was dyal shaped and our church building was at its centre". As pilots prepare to disperse the smell with an aerial spray of eighteen tons of perfume, the Reverend Lusa comments: "So because of all our unparadiseable, vicious sins, God, who is a just and loving father, has now showered us in an invisible, shattering shroud of Rottiness and Decay." Other Samoans take a less primitive view: "I mean, what other village in this arrogant country in this vast ocean on our sinful planet possesses such a unique smell?" It is a conundrum which, in this one story, Albert Wendt poses in a richly comic and provoking manner — but such artificiality is otherwise missing from this timely but disappointing collection.

Two further titles in Thames and Hudson's paperback series of reissued "Literary Lives" have recently appeared. They are Kingsley Amis' *Rudyard Kipling* (128pp, with 144 illustrations, £2.50, 0 500 26019 2) and Margaret Forster's *Virginia Woolf* (144pp, with 137 illustrations, £2.50, 0 500 26019 3).

Peal-meal

John Melmoth

DAVID WHELDON
A Vocation
237pp. Bodley Head. £9.95.
0370 307208

David Wheldon is a novelist who likes to call the help of painters: each of his stories tells a picture. His last novel, *The Course of Instruction*, illustrated the complexities of the writer's craft by discussing an enigmatic portrait of St George and the Dragon by a fifteenth-century Venetian painter, Carlo Crivelli. *A Vocation* ropes in Giorgio de Chirico, self-styled "metaphysician", as an accomplice in disorientation and bamboozlement, and is set in a de Chirico village — a blank monastery, a "claustral" square, a campanile and colonnades of impenetrable shadows.

Both writer and painter piece together worlds which "allow no place for concealment, not even for the eye of the observer". One protagonist, experimenting with a little plagiarized art criticism, suggests that a much-discussed print was painted "not from the viewpoint of one observer, but from the viewpoint of many". Wheldon similarly insists on the relativity of landscape: "the change in perspective brought about by the progress of a hundred yards robbed successive views of any continuity". This cutting of the ground from under the reader's feet is his principal effect.

For all that *A Vocation* is a more sonorous and extended exercise than its predecessors, its elements will be familiar to admirers of the earlier work. A mysterious traveller, Colver, lugging with him an unexplained burden of guilt ("How can I repay them?") wanders into an unnamed village. The lives of the villagers — the priest, the magistrate, the old man, the inn-keeper and his wife — are dim, silent, joyless and obscure, passed in consequence of "certain unspecified neglects". They comfort and entertain themselves by speaking perplexingly and at length about apparent banalities: "there are limits to all straight roads" or "leaving is difficult, sojourning distantly is difficult, returning is difficult, staying is difficult".

It is essential to this scheme of things that nothing much should happen. The dingy stags of kitchens with wet flagstones and attics that smell of birds' nests is rarely disturbed by anything more momentous than the dry flapping of a large ungle fly. Occasionally, an object — a brass alarm clock, a legal document — flares into surreal significance before fading back into the prevailing shabbiness.

The movements of the village are controlled by the monastery bell, which tolls in complex and unexpected ways at apparently random intervals. Deducing the precise significance of the bell is an exact if arcane science, fraught with difficulties — "had a lightly struck bell sounded twice or three times? the rapidity of the striking confuses the knowledge one has of the echoes". Colver is generally believed to have privileged access to the meaning of the pealing. However, his "vocation", such as it is, is unconscious and has no obvious bearing on either his own perceptions or the development of the novel. It is a negative capability; a relaxed attitude towards general uncertainty which, sportingly, suggests an approach to the novel as a whole. Whereas the priest expresses frustration — "I dislike things which have neither explanation nor explicable cause" — Colver, putative *aficionado*, prescribes passive receptivity, arguing that the significance of the bell is inevitably "diminished by the interpretations put upon it".

This kind of allegory secretes a protective covering that is capable of concealing a multitude of sins. It is resistant to analysis: one either enjoys it or one doesn't. Whether capricious or integral, obscurity remains obscurity. I have no idea what the end of the novel means, nor whether "Colver the magistrate" in Part II is the same as Colver the traveller in Part I, nor even how many arms he has; Wheldon goes to considerable lengths to preserve the necessary seamlessness: the topography of his separate reality is precisely figured. Trouble taken over *le mot juste* — "swallets", "kuri", "treasure-boxes", "hatched", "cown" — serves to bolster the illusion, which must be taken on its own terms. Wheldon's style is both enigmatic and precise.

Marking time

Lindsay Duguid

STANLEY MIDDLETON
An After-Dinner's Sleep
274pp. Hutchinson. £9.95.
009 1636205

Stanley Middleton has the reputation of having no reputation: he has written twenty-five novels but there is no consensus about his literary standing in the way that there is about, say, Anthony Powell or William Cooper. Of the long list of titles published since 1958 only four are in print, in grey Methuen paperbacks, and even *The Holiday*, which was the joint winner of the Booker Prize in 1974, is unavailable. The books have, on the whole, been respectfully received; praise for the author's accurate descriptions of lower-middle-class life and good ear for dialogue alternating with mild reservations about lack of impact and pedestrian characters. The stamina entailed in producing — and reading — so many similar books somehow militates against excitement. The curiously flat and unmemorable titles — *Distractions*, *Ends and Means*, *Terms of Reference*, *Two's Company* — appear once a year, with the exceptions of 1959, 1965, 1967 and 1981. What was Middleton doing instead?

Middleton's chosen subject matter, his bourgeois Midlands settings, schoolmasters, broken marriages and estranged children call forth adjectives such as "delicate", "precise" and "evocative". In his earlier days metropolitan reviewers' shorthand compared him to Alan Sillitoe and Arnold Bennett, though there is a pristine about his work which those authors do not share. Middleton's carefully worked out themes of redemption and forgiveness, his emphasis on rationality, ordinariness and the healing power of classical music, his tact, his deliberately self-effacing style — more concerned with getting the detail right than striking sparks — are further barriers to enthusiasm.

In all these respects *An After-Dinner's Sleep* (a typically dispiriting borrowing) resembles its predecessors. It is in many ways a rather primitive fiction, presenting a "slice of life", a series of episodes in the retirement of Alistair Murray, a former director of education living a comfortable but lonely existence in an uncharacterized Hertfordshire town. Murray has a relationship of sorts with his son and daughter-in-law in London and has contact with a police inspector and the couple next door, but most of his days are taken up with thoughts of the past, his parent, his dead wife and estranged daughter, and his precarious independence. The no-

tion that he is simply marking time, waiting for death, exerts a strong grip on protagonist and reader alike. The reappearance of an old flame, an alarming rich widow, known before as a "raw and randy" schoolgirl; a murder; a seduction; a marriage proposal and a death are all mutedly conveyed by decent, throat-clearing Murray, who more than once describes himself in a characteristically dud cliché as "an old dull stick".

Middleton provides painstaking descriptions which can degenerate into lists ("No grey showed in her hair, but the colour seemed natural, or not obviously of chemical origin. The fine eyes were large, bright, calm, though darkened, faintly wrinkled at the corners") or simple banality ("Wind cut through his topcoat, reddened his ears. The high stone walls of the gardens rose colourless under dull light. In the open-front gardens of new houses he noticed clumps of daffodil stalks, closed crocuses, snowdrops.") This methodical delineation — even a football match which Murray briefly watches is given its explanatory paragraph — has a curious effect. Not lively enough to be called vignettes, these individual episodes are filled with a spurious tension as the reader wonders why they have been singled out. The prose, full of clichés and awkward contractions, is not flexible enough to deal with the frustrations of the female characters (whose stories would, one feels, make a rich and tempestuous novel on their own) or with the pathos of the small boy next door.

One would not have thought that there could be an "and yet" after all this. And yet, even in this late, rather depressing novel, there is evidence of considerable strengths. The author's honesty and perseverance pay off in several memorable scenes in which the texture of small-town society is finely displayed. There is a moving account of a visit to a country church where a wedding is recalled and a funeral foreseen. A London Christmas drinks party is aptly caught from Murray's blurred viewpoint. Even the rather relentlessly specific descriptions of listening to music relax a little.

Perhaps it is only now, with old age and death as his persistent themes, that Middleton's peculiar talents are coming into their own. His distancing plays are well suited to autobiographical fiction; a brief discussion — apropos Murray's own proposed memoir — of whether T. S. Eliot was "more interested in the artefact than in what he's found out by direct contact" raises the interesting possibility that the novel's lack of intimacy is deliberate. It is also possible that the author is acknowledging his own falling. The central mystery of Stanley Middleton remains.

The ineffectual Fifties

Roz Kaveney

ICE PHILLIPS
The Fifties
206pp. Hodder and Stoughton. £9.95.
0340 388196

Doc Phillips makes no attempt here to go along with fashionable revisionist attempts to show the 1950s as a fun period full of baby boom, Vietnam, spinning socialites, and there are times when she hits the right note of private bewilderment, best and rather perceptive, nevertheless. More often, though, in her slightly dogmatic desire to show some of the dire effects of the period — sexual and social repression, and, of course, major implausibilities and inconsistencies — a picture of more concentrated and more muted repression and absurdity might have served her turn better. When, for example, Ella's father-school trustee with Arthur in the school pavilion lead to her pregnancy, her subsequent father proves oddly well provided with an unmarked illegal abortion. Odd hints of incestuous desire and an obsession with photographing the favourite among his daughters are followed by his abandonment of his family for a mistress with hardly a regret or explanation. Both parents are great stone faces, and the future of either daughter to penetrate their stony lack of emotion even during crises seems to look more like their, than the parents', weakness and irresponsibility; not

perhaps what Phillips intended. Ella and her sister, Ginny, have vague sexual awakenings and vague moments of rebelliousness; Ella thinks for a week or two that she might be a lesbian and then decides, on as little evidence, that she is not. Her parents have tried to stop a friendship with a slightly disreputable school friend, as she goes behind their back to continue it. A picture of the 1950s as a period in which the forces of repression mutually operated by intellectual fertilization is neither as satisfying nor as credible as a more realistic picture.

Which of the descriptions in this slightly vague novel is based on rather laborious personal knowledge and representations of the two daughters, Ella and Ginny, who are the livelier and more literate mind. Similarly, much is made of the ways bad living informed the life of the single-parent family in which Arthur, by growing up, only for this contrast to be shown what contrasted by the way his mother remarries and Ella becomes unwisely infatuated. Doc Phillips seems to have little coherent sense of what she wants to say in the novel as a whole. The style is decent, journalistic; the dialogue is an adequate representation of the air of the time, which is not wholly a commendation. What this book signals, like any novel of the time, is that it is not worthy to present as the true face of a decade becomes a rather flat finish, perhaps true to the author's vision, but not hugely entertaining or illuminating.

To the woods

Neville Shack

TONY WEEKS-PEARSON
Dodo
158pp. Viking/Salamander. £9.95.
0948681 004

Natural selection marked the dodo down; its bloated shape and inability to fly were hardly guarantees of survival. But in Tony Weeks-Pearson's first novel, *Dodo*, there is a loophole to the laws of evolution on one tropical island. Deep in the forest, the creature has lived on after becoming extinct everywhere else. Its existence is unknown, poignantly symbolizing a kind of pre-colonial innocence before European man has done his destructive work — bloodshed and institutionalized slavery among other things. Paradise is now in trouble, this being a tale of natural and spiritual corruption, as well as of the equivocal effects of technology and knowledge.

Mr Fitch, an English schoolteacher of earnest disposition, becomes intrigued by the fabled dodo and sets out to find it — much to the dismay of the authorities. His curiosity turns into obsession, a quest which harnesses personal resources, imaginative power and self-discipline only to subvert the rationality of the whole exercise. Trekking across the island as if possessed, he tries to describe the indescribable in letters to his mother. Fitch knows himself to be out on a limb, beyond the confines of civilization and habit. His search for clues takes him to a marsh called the Sea of Dreams, but the irony of the name is lost on him. An otherwise unexceptional, obtuse character who happens to transform his hobby into something mystical, Fitch has not bargained for the dodo's totemic force on the island. Gradually, he intuits the fact of his own expansive ignorance despite the apparent success of the mission.

Charles Darwin makes intermittent appearances during his stop-over on the Beagle. The

Victorian scientist's dream-world is invaded by tropical imagery. He notes the golden age that once existed, free from man's interference; human barbarism suggests itself as a possibility, but Darwin is safely away before his idylls are disturbed. So the dodo has the last laugh, in a sense, on its modern zoological undertaker. Beneath the commonplaces of science and the superficial harmony of the landscape, passions are inflamed. Das, a rebellious Indian worker, looks for his pot of gold and, by chance, comes across the monstrous dodo. Inevitably, Das's and Fitch's fortunes intertwine. The unworried teacher recovers enough bones to send back to England for reconstruction as a skeleton. But soon the dodo's significance for the island becomes overpowering; an alliance of superstition and plain profiteering takes over, with images of the bird all around on badges and jewellery. When a plague spreads death and the community is fractured, the survivors compare their plight to the patient dodo, some even seeing it as "privileged sharing", an opportunity to attain higher wisdom.

The story's fatefulness underlines its connection with fable; the central emblem inspires a tableau of well-worn narrative themes such as folly and discord. Spare descriptions evoke an eerie mood out of the remote spaces of the island, so that the mystery and awesomeness of the near-mythical bird are heightened to maximum effect. All the elements, animal, vegetable and mineral, have been brought together to fine effect.

The Spring 1986 number of *The Georgia Review* (Volume XL, Number 1: 344pp. University of Georgia. \$4. Subscription \$9 for four issues, available from *The Georgia Review*, University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia 30602 U.S.A.) is a "Fortieth Anniversary Fiction Retrospective", gathering, according to the editorial, "what we feel to be some of the most compelling writing published in the pages of this magazine over the years". The issue includes stories by William Faulkner and Joyce Carol Oates.

Japan in Transition

From Tokugawa to Meiji
Edited by Marius B. Jansen and Gilbert Rozman

In this book social scientists scrutinize the middle decades of the nineteenth century in Japan. That scrutiny is important and overdue, for the period from 1830 to the 1860s has usually been treated in terms of politics and foreign relations. Yet those decades were also of vital importance in Japan's institutional modernization. As the Japanese entered the world order, they experienced a massive introduction of Western-style organizations. Sweeping reforms, without the class violence or the rapid pace of change that characterized the Meiji Restoration introduced a political transformation, but these chapters address the more gradual social transition. Illustrated. \$47.50

Six Dynasties Poetry

Kang-I Sun Chang

"This study is, to my knowledge, the first in English or any Western language to study these poets in the larger context of the entire period. The work establishes Dr. Chang as one of the three or four best scholars working on traditional Chinese poetry today."
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The Fracture of Meaning

Japan's Synthesis of China from the Eighteenth through the Nineteenth Centuries
David Pollack

From the beginning of its recorded history and the opening to the West in the last century Japan was caught between two worlds. David Pollack explores the dialectical relationship between the two countries figured more importantly in the Japanese sense of identity and civilization than in the particular borrowed Chinese cultural materials. He brings together the philosophical, literary, and historical aspects of the relationship, and shows how the opposition of foreign and native content and alien form "fractured" Japanese expression. Illustrated. \$29.50

Kurozumikyō and the New Religions of Japan

Helen Hardacre

Adherents of several hundred groups known as "new religions" include roughly one-third of the Japanese population, but these movements remain largely unstudied in the West. To account for their general similarity, Helen Hardacre identifies a common world-view uniting the new religions. She then uses the example of Kurozumikyō, a Shinto religion founded in rural Japan in 1814, to show how the new religions developed from older religious organizations. Illustrated. \$28.00

A History of Japanese Literature

Volume Two: The Early Middle Ages

Im'ichi Konishi
Translated by Allen Gatten
Edited by Earl Miner

The second of five volumes planned to give a systematic account of Japanese literature from its beginnings to the death of the modern novel. In this book, Konishi establishes the character of the literature of the early Middle Ages, from the ninth to the mid-eighth century. These years were a formative period marked by the fusion of most of the major kinds of Japanese literature and by the appearance of the Tale of Genji. The distinguished scholar Im'ichi Konishi discusses a variety of other topics: the adaptation of Chinese ideas to Japanese literary practice. He also examines literature in Chinese by Japanese, along with important Korean influences. Illustrated. £75. £15.00. C. \$40.00

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DAVID PRYCE-JONES
The Afternoon Sun
214pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £8.95.
0 297 78822 1

Of the many novels set against the Holocaust, several have come close to a pornography of horror. William Styron was obviously aware of this danger in *Sophie's Choice*, for he felt obliged to dispute the argument that the Final Solution was too monstrous a subject for fiction. David Pryce-Jones, on the other hand, has no need for self-consciousness.

A superficial inspection of *The Afternoon Sun* might well give impressions of *déjà vu* — a sort of Jewish *Buddenbrooks*, which uses the descriptive device of old photographs, as in Anita Brookner's *Family and Friends*, and culminates in a great-grandson's search for the truth twenty years after the key event. Yet Pryce-Jones has skilfully steered clear of claustrophobic introspection as well as dramatic torment. His achievement is an understated and quietly vigorous novel, convincing, absorbing and unexpectedly powerful. One of its notable qualities is the portrayal of that strange relationship between *Mitteleuropa* and England.

From a Jewish orphanage in Nuremberg, the founding, Gustav Ellingen, makes his way to fortune and then fame in Vienna. Cool-headed speculation after a stock-market crash enables him to establish the largest heavy-engineering concern in the Austrian Empire. Prince Solkovsky, a genial opportunist, makes himself his friend and partner, and Gustav, although devoid of social ambition, becomes a landowner in Hungary, a racehorse owner and a baron. Among gentlemen amateurs, he seems invincible even at their own sport. His success in the 1905 Austrian Derby brings his daughter Henriette her first taste of antisemitism from men who crowd round to congratulate her

father.

After Gustav's death in 1919, Henriette takes over the patriarchal role and the company's problems. Her husband, a homosexual aesthete, declines a directorship, while their son Jules is only interested in the piano. (This veering away from trade is reminiscent of other Jewish families such as those of Wittgenstein and Zweig). The Nazi *Anschluss* forces Henriette to flee to England, Jules, who is horrified by her remarriage, goes in the opposite direction, to their property in Hungary. But in 1940, leaving behind his infant son (the narrator of the post-war years), he returns to seek his fate in Vienna, in what would seem to be a mirror reversal of his grandfather's beginnings. The last person to see him is Paul Solkovsky, the son of Gustav's friend and Jules's own musical rival from childhood.

This encounter on a forest track in winter, a silent exchange of looks between a *Wehrmacht* officer and a ragged prisoner bound for a death camp, reveals the essence of the book. Solkovsky bewails his impotence in a letter to Henriette. But Jules's son, twenty years after the event, is less forgiving when he finally meets Solkovsky, for he finds self-pity rather than contrition; regret, almost resentment, at the bad luck of having seen somebody he knew in that otherwise faceless mass. The author's focus on passive collaboration becomes even clearer when Henriette returns to Vienna to find that close friends have looted her house. They even manage to defend their conduct; their relationship with the Nazis "was quite correct", and they were sure she would not mind them taking things which would have disappeared in any case.

The mentality of collaboration is a theme to which Pryce-Jones does justice, in both senses. And his lightness of touch is astonishing in the circumstances. But his real success comes from having rejected the obvious target — the enormity of evil — and taken on a more subtle one, the border zone between "good" and "bad" German.

Casualties of silence

Lesley Chamberlain

LISA ST. AUBIN DE TERÁN
The Bay of Silence
163pp. Cape. £8.95.
0 224 92345 4

Lisa St. Aubin de Terán's fourth novel is a sickly inward journey. Recounting his half of it, William seems to be seeking an allegory to describe his wife Rosalind's schizophrenia, to which she silently replies:

I probably don't really mind. I keep going back to things myself. It's the labelling I don't like. I feel that he's obsessed by two because he's convinced I'm schizophrenic, and I don't like being put in a special jar like that. Why does he think I'm mentally ill? Because when we were blissfully happy on our honeymoon, I met the most wonderful man in the world and fell in love with him too. Why was that? I don't know.

It is part of Rosalind's condition that she doesn't seek explanations, or her identity, preferring to watch the sea, which alone of all things around her doesn't want to scoop out her brain. After producing bizarre twins early in her marriage, she has a third baby in the likeness of her perfect lover, Angelo. But mental collapse follows and the baby Amadeo dies as mysteriously as he seems to have been conceived. William is left to pick up the pieces, not so much of a shattered marriage as of an inner silence in Rosalind that neither of them understands. Their problem is one of mental exclusion, the problem of the personality which has become unfathomable because the mind informing it, which might otherwise have brought it to account, seems rather to have petered out, like the paths leading from the mainland of Sestri Levante into the Bay of Silence.

Opposite the Bay of Silence lies the Bay of Fairy Tales. The names of lover, child and places in the Ligurian setting of the novel have something of the mythical aura surrounding St. Aubin de Terán's last novel *The Tiger*, but the magic here is black. Angelo, rising out of the sea Rosalind yearns for, delivers her into utter self-delusion, a state of being only she regards

as comfort. He leads her to confuse life and death. Her sick mind reaches outside itself to infect reality; the casualties are the baby and William.

The alternating lover's monologues are retrospective, autobiographical, half-proud, half-apologetic. There is some pathos in the form, for as a means of communication or mutually acceptable explanation they get nowhere. Rosalind eternally draws death and corruption to herself, first in the shape of an emotionally underdeveloped governess, then an incestuously predatory uncle, ultimately a leaking nuclear reactor in France, a cot death, and her retarded, perhaps brilliant twins. Mysteries none of us understands cling to her. As she says, "everywhere I go to hide is bad". In her illness she leaves William's pet tortoise, symbol of his deprived childhood, to rot. The only moments of her life she remembers are moments of dislocation and shock, from which the emotion is absent. Those moments include offering to buy the adult William a new toilet. Watching, and acting in, films only occasionally provide fairy-tale refuge from the sea of incomprehension.

Somewhere in the course of the death cycle Rosalind is declared cured, but there is no end to her disease. As the book ends it grows into its beginning and the first two chapters warrant re-reading. Only one real quibble: it is not quite fitting that such pain should be related with the same pace and fluency as the author's earlier adventure story, a tale of only outward doings. *The Slow Train to Milan*.

Graham Greene pronounced Ford Madox Ford the novelist most likely to survive the century; Ford himself was less confident — he was in the habit of repeating in his new book "some story or piece of morality" from an older, unobtainable one — and with good reason, for his reputation appears constantly to be in need of recuperation. The Spring 1986 issue of *Antaeus* is devoted to Ford. It contains critical essays, bibliographies and an introduction by the guest editor, Sandra J. Stang. *Antaeus* costs \$20 for four issues, from 18 West 30th Street, New York 10001.

In the (k)night-time

Anne Haverty

KATHY ACKER
Don Quixote
207pp. Paladin. Paperback. £2.95.
0 586 08554 8

Kathy Acker is haunted by a vision of life as a kind of operating-table where one is slowly done to death by a team of malicious and capricious doctors, and by the thought that there may still be an escape. She seeks love. She seeks to evade death. She struggles as a child or the archetypal woman might struggle against male perversions of nature: the city, western politics, technology, medicine. Her female Don Quixote is no mere commentator. She participates in experience, in corruption, in the receiving and inflicting of love.

This Don Quixote has an abortion which makes her mad but liberates her into her knight-hood — "Because to Don Quixote having an abortion is a method of becoming a knight and saving the world. This is a vision...". The novel is a meditation on her (k)night-time journey. It is a loosely structured succession of surreal images and unreal events, interlarded occasionally with other texts, as is Acker's habit — in this case passages from political history. *Don Quixote* has the qualities of a dream, sometimes the intensities of one, and sometimes the brutal persuasiveness of nightmare. Its narrative thread is tenuous, its locations timeless and shifting. Its characters come and go: talking dogs, a Prince, God, pirates. Don Quixote herself, more concerned with the varied problems of love than with windmills, metamorphoses into an unsuccessful Juan. Her tilting is expressed in her madness and her irreverence. The enemies this Don Quixote must subdue are her obsessive need for love, which nullifies her sense of self, and her political enemies — "the evil enchanters of this world such as the editors of *TLS* and

Ronald Reagan". If theirs are the voices of orthodoxy, hers is the voice of anarchy, lyrical and crass by turns. Her words are the absolute words of romance: hope, despair, love, death, devastation and creation.

On her night journey, Don Quixote has many adventures, mostly sexual and largely painful. She enacts her fantasies and acquires knowledge: that ecstasy no longer resides in rejection, that God is imperfect — "you can't turn to Me: Turn to yourself". She awakes, appeased, to the world of the morning. She has travelled into and emerged from the Acker blackness of memory and experience where anarchy reigns.

This intractable novel is required too often to serve as a dumping-ground for its author's many random musings and aphorisms, which gives an impression of self-indulgence and often makes it tedious to read. It has some of the worst qualities of dream-literature: a cluttered opacity, the relentless recounting of haphazard events, the lack of a centre in the mutant character of Don Quixote. These might be accommodated if the prose was as consistently beautiful as it sometimes is, but Acker is too often undisciplined and toneless.

And yet, for all its tedium and jarring rhythms, *Don Quixote* is a significant addition to the too thin body of experimental writing in English. Acker speaks from a level that is both above and below the urbanity of daily life, from the complex world of misery and exploitation that yet fears annihilation. And she does so with a voice of natural sophistication, strikingly remote from the bourgeois canon. She is also very funny. Her presentation of American history, and the chapter "An Examination of What Kind of Schooling Women Need" are gruesomely clever and subversive. *Don Quixote* is also, thematically at least, a development for Kathy Acker. Here, the personal complement the political concerns, and her perspectives on both escape banality. Her raw and direct responses make this mistress of the obscene a writer of admirable purity.

Puffing the nuts

Andrew Hislop

NICHOLAS SALAMAN
Falling Apart
190pp. Secker and Warburg. £9.50.
0 436 44087 3

Some chefs beat show their skills by producing complicated meals full of exotic ingredients, others by making something simple and commonplace, only doing it far better than others. In his latest novel, *Falling Apart*, about the breakdown of a career woman working for a snack-food manufacturer, Nicholas Salaman appears to be just knocking up a little something, admirably economic rather than mouth-watering, unusual, but well peppered with piquant wit. Then we suddenly find ourselves with something unexpected to chew on; *Falling Apart* turns out to be a much more complicated dish, and Salaman ends up making much more of a meal of it.

The ingredients seem familiar enough for contemporary fiction: Yuppy adultery and alienation, role reversal in the modern couple, satire on imported American consumer culture. Charlet, thirty-four-year-old, blonde and beautiful Group Brand Manager of a snack-food conglomerate called Fastfoods, is on the make. The world, now that she has gone back to work after having two children, is her "shell-fish-flavoured Sea Snack".

She soon realizes that in an office "buzzing with lust", upward mobility can be much helped by clutching key personnel in a horizontal hold. Much of this takes place in a love-nest above a dentist's surgery, called the Waiting Room, but one Fastfood merger is enjoyed in the tower block headquarters, John Keats House, resulting in a "little stain on the regulation beige tufted-pile carpet".

Charlet's partner in pollution, the powerful, ambitious Bruce, seems to have engineered her best career move yet when she is put in sole charge of the development company's new secret weapon in the taste war, Nut Puffs. An earlier in-house love had made light of a coital quagmire, but if Fastfoods could make a bubble

like that... Nut Puffs is almost such a bubble, an aerated borborygmus of a savoury nibble dipped in pheromones which are based on human "trigger smells" and "turn on more than the tastebuds". It's really junk food.

Family life is no hindrance to Charlet's progress in love or snacks. Her domesticated husband, Howard, a work-at-home designer of comic cards and toy tricks, and their gourmet children, are completely self-sufficient. Her only role at home is occasionally to choose the wine and to be the butt of her family's jokes-practical (as a guinea-pig for Howard's inventions) and verbal. Influenced by a pile of old magazines, her children, who call her Group Brand Mummager, have a quaint "top-hole" brand of humour. Charlet's (as a not-tough Bruce, for example: "I think I've puffed enough nuts for today") is more work-oriented.

One member of her family causes her many more problems: her dead father, whom she never really knew. Fantasy and investigation combine to make her suppose that he was much more interesting than her mother ever let on, and perhaps is not even dead. These unbalancing tendencies are not helped by her suspicion that she might possess psychic powers.

For a while the success of the Nut Puffs project keeps such gremlins at bay, but when the snack suddenly suffers from a sort of belated brewer's droop, her life — at home as well as at work — does indeed fall apart. Enter father, real or imaginary, but before we can digest his appearance the narration is seized from the workmanlike third person by none other than the dentist. Novelists got up to such tricks long before they became recently fashionable. Too often, however, as here, they provide an excuse for abandoning narrative methods in mid-course without providing a sustained, radical alternative to them.

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God and the physical scientist

Brian Pippard

I am a physicist and an agnostic, neither believing nor disbelieving in a supreme being, lacking indeed any personal experience which might allow me to attach a meaning to the idea. To make this state of ignorance an excuse or even an incentive to attack the beliefs of others, as some do, seems to me indefensible. It is as if a tone-deaf man were to deride the pretensions of those who find in music an expression of realities which lie beyond the power of words. When the scientist can explain convincingly to a musician the origin and mechanism of musical feeling he may care to try his hand at religious belief. The true believer, however, need not fear — his citadel is impregnable to scientific assault because it occupies territory which is closed to science.

The domain of science is vast, comprising in principle all experiences and observations which can be agreed on by an overwhelming consensus. Where consensus fails, and discussion is fruitless, is in such matters as whether roses smell the same to you as to me. The inner world of individual consciousness is wholly private even to the psychologist, whose scientific concern is not to explain what Mind is, but to construct theories which help one to believe one understands why people act as they do. To use the musical analogy again, the science of psychology is something like the theories of harmony and counterpoint, in that analysis of the practice of the great masters enables a set of rules to be drawn up well enough to programme a computer. One does not expect the output to be great music; at best it may pass as the production of a competent hack. If something more exciting emerges it will only be by chance, and will require a human listener to recognize its worth. All attempts to model the brain as a super-computer are in principle scientific theories, concerned with mechanisms which can be described in words and assented to by any who care to understand. No such theory can jump the gap between a mechanism that has been designed to simulate a thinking creature, and the genuine article, the thinker I know myself to be and, for courtesy's sake (though without the same direct knowledge), I assume you are also.

The classic dichotomy of Mind and Matter remains as absolute as ever, and much of the controversy between religion and science could have been avoided if both sides had agreed on this. But scientists, in the enthusiasm of their success in interpreting the material world, have thoughtlessly extended their arguments into the mental and spiritual domains; conversely, some theologians and priests, traditionally the guardians of cosmological theories, have clung to their primitive accounts in the face of conflicting scientific evidence, fearing for their faith and moral standards, or those of their flock.

I have deliberately begun a discussion of scientific evidence concerning the existence and nature of God at the point where scientific method is called in doubt. By emphasizing our inability to include consciousness in the programme we scientists are forced to wonder whether what we study is reality itself or only a distorted view of reality — an invention of our minds, whatever those words may mean. That they do mean something, I think we all agree — we cannot believe that the collective efforts of a million minds can result in an agreed fiction concerning an illusion. But it is all too easy for us to accept uncritically a simplistic materialism which assumes the world of the senses to be essentially the same as what is "out there", as if God (if he existed) could look down and see something very like what we see, only presumably rather more clearly. Reacting from this, Niels Bohr led the way: among physicists, the doctrine that the scientist has no concern with "reality" — his job is to construct a model to relate as exactly as possible the various observations on which all reasonable people can agree.

I intend the word "model" to convey the rather precise sense of an intellectual construction with carefully stated assumptions and rules for logical manipulation. Newton's *Principia* presented the first great model of the universe; which has since been extended and modified into something that is now immensely versatile. It includes not only the object of

On pages 555-9 and 564-9, we consider ways in which belief in, and ideas about, God impinge on a number of areas of human activity and thought: the physical sciences, anthropology, psychology, philosophy, literature. The main articles are interspersed with reviews of books on related matters.

everyday life that we think we perceive directly, but the atoms and molecules, themselves made up of fundamental particles, and the hypothetical forces by which they interact. The rules for manipulating the model include the non-Euclidean geometry of relativity theory and the equations of quantum mechanics. Applied to situations of such simplicity that the mathematical problems are soluble, or computers powerful enough to deal with them, they have led, on countless occasions, to solutions agreeing with observation in a way that rules out the possibility of mere accident. When theory and observation disagree the normal reaction is to seek for an error in calculation or experiment; failing which, the basic assumptions of the particular calculation are scrutinized to make sure a significant point has not been overlooked. In sixty years the model has been extended but not basically changed, and anyone who, without meticulous scrutiny, makes discrepancies an excuse for trying to overthrow it is dismissed as a crank.

Nevertheless the model is still a model, not reality itself, if only because its elementary units, electrons and protons, say, have to be assigned extraordinary properties unlike anything we can touch or see. There have always been physicists who like to think that underlying the apparent strangeness is a more sensible substructure that the grossness of our senses precludes from being observed directly. In their view the equations of quantum mechanics are derivative from something which is, apart from its tiny dimensions, much more like the world we know. However, as long ago as 1930 it was proved that no system involving "hidden variables" could yield the mathematical structure of quantum mechanics. Various attempts to get round this limitation have indeed resulted in what their authors think are plausible instances of the true reality — only the properties which have to be postulated are

even more grotesquely unimaginable than those they sought to replace. In practice, most physicists accept quantum mechanics and the other basic postulates for what they are, a gloriously successful programme for describing consistently, and with great economy, the whole of the world of observation.

One aspect of this model which has perturbed scientists, theologians and laymen equally is the element of chance in quantum mechanics, closely linked to Heisenberg's uncertainty principle. There is no way of predicting precisely the outcome of an experiment — an electron emitted from a point on a hot filament may go here or there, and all we can do is calculate how many out of a crowd of electrons leaving the same way will finish up at various places, never which one will go where. "God does not play dice" expressed Einstein's revulsion at the whole notion, which he could never bring himself to accept. And some theologians have seen in an apparent breakdown of causality the collapse of one of their strongest arguments for the existence of God. On the other hand, a few welcomed the intrusion of a chance element as a mechanism whereby God could fiddle the accounts without being detected. But can one really believe in a God who has gone to such trouble to create a marvellously consistent and fertile universe, leaving himself the option of interfering with it (but not too often, and only when no one is looking)? It is too much like cheating at Patience.

A better answer to these worries is to remember that at the level of human experience it is extremely hard to devise a convincing demonstration of the chance element of quantum mechanics. Normally, so many particles are involved in the processes we observe that the elementary caprices average out. This is why the rules of quantum mechanics, when applied to large collections of atoms, yield the simpler rules of classical mechanics, lacking any ele-

ment of indeterminacy. Thus we have no examples from everyday life to make such randomness intuitively comprehensible. In any case, when we say we can't imagine how electrons or protons could behave so strangely we fall into the very trap we should have known to avoid — we are ascribing reality to the elements of a model. That even Einstein made this mistake shows how strong is the temptation. Whatever the ultimate reality is that underlies the sensory impressions we interpret as material objects, and explain in terms of fundamental particles and mathematical equations, it has so far eluded imagination; we must not expect to discover or deny God by comparing any model we have managed to construct for ourselves with a futile preconception of what it ought to have been.

All the same, the search for evidence of God's existence in the material world is not lightly abandoned. Why does the universe exist at all, if it was not created? The evidence that it all started with a Big Bang hangs together pretty well, better than any other hypothesis. The trouble is that we can talk about the beginning but not of a time before the beginning; nor, when we imagine the start as an inconceivably hot fireball, are we allowed to picture it situated somewhere in space. Space and time as we know them are aspects of the universe itself, not, as Newton supposed, a divine absolute framework and a divine clock within which our universe came into being at God's command. It is hard enough to imagine space and time as linked in the way demanded by relativity theory, let alone anything that transcends these primary concepts. No human meaning can be attached to the idea of God "outside the universe" nor, in a timeless nowhere, to words like "act of creation" or "God's purpose". To labour the point once again, our notion of the universe is part of the model we have built, and if we are to find God it will not be by looking within the model, or outside it, but in the no-place and the no-time where we cannot look, the reality beyond our grasp. I think the majority of scientists accept that no explicit revelation of God's presence is to be expected in the faultless mechanics of the lifeless material world. There may be implicit (teleological, say) evidence, however, as well as arguments derived from the existence of living creatures.

When it comes to the point, the fact of life itself turns out to be a rather useless clue. The same fundamental laws appear to govern living and non-living alike. Quantum mechanics accounts for the structure of atoms and the forces that hold them together in molecules, however large and complex they are. If a long double-helix of DNA has the potential, given the right environment, of dividing into two and thence rebuilding itself into two replicas of the original, this is still entirely in accordance with physical laws; and the more one investigates such matters the less probable does any departure from the laws seem. The behaviour of DNA underlies the process of reproduction in all life-forms, and follows from the architecture assumed by the molecule in response to the straightforward physical forces between its constituent parts.

Taking DNA as a typical, if primitive, sample of living matter, one must recognize that the difference between living and non-living resides in complexity of structure, not in additional forces of nature. New structures have new properties that the scientist's imagination cannot usefully foresee from what he already understands; yet when he observes something new he expects to find (though not always easily) that it is indeed one of the myriad potentialities of that deceptively simple fundamental model. It is the strength of the reductionist method in science that it distinguishes between basic principles which govern every element of a structure, and properties which emerge from the complexity of the structure as a whole and which are to be understood only by studying the whole, in the confidence that the basic principles need not be queried. The well-understood behaviour of semiconductors is all the physics one needs, in principle, to grasp how a large computer works; but between the textbook of solid-state physics and the working computer lies the steady evolution of complexity at the hands of computer scientists; and to follow the details is a most intricate task. How much more so with life, which began and has since evolved, despite the widely ignorant



The Ladder of Being, or Scale of Nature, in Ramon Lull's Book of the Ascend and Descend of the Intellect (1305) as depicted in the first printed edition of 1512; reproduced from William Hunter and the eighteenth-century medical world edited by W. F. Bynum and Roy Porter (424pp. Cambridge University Press. £35. 0 521 26806 0), to be reviewed in a later issue of the TLS.

claims of Creationists, by natural law and chance to a degree of complexity very far exceeding any conceivable computer.

Up to the present, scientists who have examined living creatures either as complete entities, or by taking them to pieces, have found nothing that cannot be ascribed to purposeless mechanism. Nor will they find more from the most delicate probing of a thinking brain; the biochemical and electrical processes may come to light but nothing that they will recognize as conscious thought, for there is no objective test for this.

Before proceeding beyond this critical point in the argument, let us pause to ask whether there is anything implicit in the physicist's model of the material world to indicate that it was set up in such a way that a high degree of complexity could evolve. For this might suggest a creative purpose in the universe. The question has been much discussed recently under the general heading of Anthropolism and, as one has come to expect, the answer is ambiguous. It is true that the numbers occurring in the basic laws (for example, the empirical fact that the proton is 1,836 times more massive than the electron) have values which permit the development and survival of conditions like those on the Earth, giving time enough for chemical complexity to evolve. Very small changes in these numbers would stop the stars forming or make them burn out quickly, and if God had not given a lot of thought to the problem he might well have created a sterile universe. What we can't know is whether all

possible universes may not exist in the mind of God, only some of which can support rational creatures who are able to imagine themselves unique. We may also have misinterpreted God's purpose in assuming that it was our eventual appearance that he had in mind at the moment of creation. But we have left the realm of physicists' models and taken refuge in metaphor. Let us simply note that those who are so disposed may find here proof of God's purpose, but like all such proofs it will not convince the unbeliever.

Having contemplated, however desultorily, the idea that God might have created a different universe, we should take note of a widespread barrier to belief, the problem of evil. How could God have allowed a world in which such cruelty and suffering are possible? The scientific rationalist answers that the world shows every sign of being a consistent mechanism operating according to inexorable laws, any departure from which would represent the denial of a basic principle of non-intervention. God cannot prevent the fall of a sparrow without unmaking the world, and if it was designed so that intelligent creatures could exercise free will we must take the rough with the smooth, working out our own salvation so far as it lies within our power. As for what is not within our power to change or control, we might as well blame God because pi is not equal to 3 as for permitting an earthquake to overwhelm a city.

But wait a moment - who is this scientific rationalist who will allow the possibility of free

will in a strictly mechanical universe? I for one, and surely not alone. Since we have not the smallest inkling of the relationship between the material world and our capacity for thought, we must accept that it may, indeed is likely to, carry with it other equally mysterious properties, just as the computer is more than the sum of its parts. This does not mean that anything goes. Claims that the mind has power over matter are very much more frequent than successful demonstrations, and those who pray for rain when the wind is in the east are likely to be disappointed. Like Dr Johnson in the matter of ghosts, or Father Brown on miracles, we must allow the possibility while probing every instance most sceptically. Thus we may doubt whether genuine free will is often exercised, seeing how automatic our responses are to an emergency, and even how, faced with the need for careful decision, we usually choose what we know in our hearts we always intended. Yet the desires which govern choice may well have been formed by the conscious exercise of will. And how many would allow that the genius of Mozart or Michelangelo was mere automatism? We should not attach too much weight to the arguments of behaviourists. Behaviourism is fine for flatworms and, I am prepared to concede, for rats in mazes; for thinking creatures it is baseless scientism.

The same applies to the efforts of the professional atheist, who must produce better arguments than bluff common sense to laugh away the certainty of those who are convinced of God's presence within them. To be sure, the

varieties of belief are so many and so contradictory as to give the unbeliever every opportunity for scorn; not everyone that saith Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven. But when scepticism has done its worst there remain those of transparent integrity against whom scientific materialism cannot prevail. And the honest scientist must admit that his own code provides no sanction for ignoring inconvenient evidence.

The agnostics among us, however, may doubt whether the gifts of rational thought and of divine indwelling are coextensive. Intellectual powers themselves are diverse enough to resist simple categorization - quite a number of literary people wholly lack the ability to appreciate mathematics or music, and conversely one of the most distinguished of recent physicists confessed (as was obvious to his friends) that poetry held no meaning for him. I have no difficulty in accepting, without envy, that some of my friends have inherited or acquired by experience a faculty that is not mine, which has given them an unshakable assurance of God's purpose and their part in it. I may seem to them that my life must be dumb and pointless, but there are compensations. The kaleidoscopic material world gives joy to those who have not learnt to despise it, and even if they cannot discern a controlling purpose they may still find confidence in its grand order to believe that, however insignificant their own part, ultimately all shall be well and all manner of thing shall be well.

God and anthropology

Raymond Firth

Anthropologists have been a bit wary of God, even without a capital letter. Ever since the days of Edward Burnett Tylor more than a century ago, we have recognized that there is no society, as we ordinarily define it, which is without some form of religion. But the concept of impersonal mystical forces, far removed from any idea of voluntary action such as a spirit being might be thought to engage in.

In all the societies they have studied, modern social anthropologists have been led to perceive what may be called the essential human drama. People everywhere, in all kinds of technical and social conditions, have been preoccupied with the ultimate problems of living: relation to nature and to one another; reasons for variation in skill and endeavour; competing claims of loyalty and self-interest, generosity and greed, love and hate, self-denial and ambition; the anguish of pain, suffering and fear of death; ideas of the definition of the self and the relation between initiative and the operations of chance or fate. Every human society has had answers to the questions so posed, or at least has worked out ways of alleviating or preventing the worst misfortunes and promoting success.

Myths, creeds and rituals, in all societies, show how people try to locate responsibility for human affairs to some degree outside the human sphere. But major themes such as the creation of the world, of man and human institutions, the source of knowledge, the moral law, good and evil in the life of man, are very differently envisaged in different societies. An essential attribute of divinity is power - extra-human, extra-physical power - and associated with this is some notion of the sacred. When power and the sacred are interpreted at ultimate or utmost level, then divinity is God. Many societies have no such image of God as a unique ultimate being. While a monotheist might see here a fragmented conception of divinity, adherents of other religious systems see their own pantheon or analogous set of concepts as positively fitted to their problems.

In exposing religious ideas held in a range of societies, the modern anthropologist has set out a vast array of formulations about guardian spirits, powers, gods, deities, creator beings, demigods, culture heroes. And since inferences about belief are derived from study of non-verbal rites and practices as well as from speech, an anthropologist's account of a religion can be deeply infused with analysis of worship, offering, libation, sacrifice, consecration, prayer, communion, prophecy, divination, spirit mediumship.

Problems familiar to us from the classical Greek philosophers appear in exotic context. When I investigated notions of the fate of the soul in so-called "primitive" communities, I found that while the health of the soul in life was a matter of critical interest, the future of the soul after death of the body was not a matter of deep concern to many peoples. They rarely believed the soul to be immortal, they often had no belief in its dependence upon any God, and had few notions of rewards and punishments in the afterlife. On the other hand, their eschatology has been more dynamic than ours, with the souls of the dead believed to be in frequent social intercourse with one another, those of the ancestors and those of the living. In Western belief, by contrast, the souls of the dead have very little to do and have almost no volition.

The problem of the relation of impersonal fate to personal responsibility was examined by the late Meyer Fortes. In his striking *Oedipus and Job in West African Religion* (1959), analysing beliefs of the Tallensi, Fortes pointed out that the Tallensi in their traditional beliefs handled the idea of man's fate as a combination of two elements of destiny, an initial endowment and a subsequent protective supervision by ancestral spirit guardians. These represented symbolically innate disposition and concrete practical upbringing on the one hand, and the more abstract forces of society on the

other. The extent of a man's success in life was then a figurative expression of his ability to control his innate drives by the proper performance of ritual to his ancestors. Any failure - including his eventual death - was interpreted as a result of his unwitting neglect of obligation. Such religious conceptions are closely linked with basic ideas of family structure and kinship ties. They are given a sacred value, but this does not derive from any idea of God. In such a context, the outcome of any divine will is highly socialized, and is seen in definitely personal human terms.

The recurrent problem of evil has also received anthropological attention. In a recent collection of essays edited by David Parkin, *The Anthropology of Evil* (reviewed in the TLS, July 19, 1985), it is suggested that there is something inherently ambiguous in many peoples' understanding of evil. Accordingly there is great diversity in the reasons given for the existence of evil, and in the classification of what actions and persons may be labelled under this head. In theistic systems, where evil may be isolated as a principle, even personified, anthropologists recognize distinctions already made by theologians. In some Hindu and Sufi Muslim systems, evil becomes an aspect of God. In the Semite religions there is a qualified semi-dualism, with God opposed by Satan but capable of mastering him and willing to help mortals in their struggle against evil. And full dualistic systems such as Manichaeism recognize good and evil as two opposed cosmic principles, eternally in antagonism. But for anthropologists the religious problem is not just one of theodicy in any narrow sense. Studies of Buddhism show that while there may be no belief in God, the concept of evil occurs at a folk level, though in a relatively weak form, consonant with the idea that the roots of wrongdoing lie within the individual himself. In many "pagan" religions, both man and his gods are conceived as naturally embodying a range of impulses which may lead to good or evil actions, judged by their results. In such a pagan system, creation is commonly believed to have been devoid of moral purpose, and evil is accepted as part of the constitution of the world. The problem is the power of evil, not its ultimate origin. Much effort may be spent, as it is in divination or spirit mediumship, to ascertain an immediate source of evil - for example, in witchcraft - but the controlling powers of the religious system may be neutral or indifferent unless they are stirred to intervention by propitiatory offering or sacrifice. In revealing the variations in the concept of evil in many societies, anthropologists have emphasized its human, pragmatic dimensions in a social context, and by implication have reinforced ideas of theodicy as a still open question.

In considering the ways in which anthropologists have dealt explicitly with the expression "God", three important points should be borne in mind. The first is that God rarely figures as a universal concept, with abstract connotation such as theologians commonly use. In an anthropological analysis, God is culturally located, and described in terms which translate what the people of a given society say and do in his regard. Secondly, while anthropologists may occasionally express propositions about God which arise from their own beliefs; for the most part they are citing the opinions of other people, produced in an alien society, and so are making a report, an interpretation at some remove from the actual experience that is being described and discussed. (The exact status of a theologian's assertions about God raises some interesting questions for anthropologists - how far, for instance, theological utterances about the existence and nature of God are made in awareness of the complex social parameters of any such general statements?) Thirdly, anthropological statements about God are essentially heuristic and exploratory. They are not concerned primarily with questions of truth or falsity or with moral qualities, but with the understanding of social concepts and relationships, with the way in which ideas of symbolic value relate to the structures of societies and the operations of people in them.

Ethnographically, interpretations of what may be thought of as specific apprehensions or images of God, among people of different cultures, fall into three broad categories. The first is the idea of God as a person, or persons, who are believed to be involved in the lives of mortals in a direct way. The second is the idea of God as a power, or powers, which are believed to be involved in the lives of mortals in a direct way. The third is the idea of God as a principle, or principles, which are believed to be involved in the lives of mortals in a direct way.

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TREVOR WILLIAMS

Form and Vitality in the World and God: A Christian perspective

356pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £22.50.
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Jürgen Moltmann's *God in Creation* contains the Gifford Lectures 1984-85 given by him in the University of Edinburgh. It is, not, however, an exercise in natural theology, but would be better described as a theology of Nature. In natural theology, one begins from the phenomena of the world and attempts to derive from them some knowledge of the existence and character of God. Moltmann's book moves in the opposite direction. Setting aside Lord Clifford's requirement that there should be no "reference to or reliance upon any supposed special exceptional or so-called miraculous revelation", Moltmann begins by assuming the Trinity God of Christian faith, and the belief that the world has been created by him, and then aims to explore what implications this belief has for our understanding of the world and for our practical attitudes. The practical issue is very much in Moltmann's mind, for he has been deeply concerned about the environmental problems faced by the industrial nations. He reminds us of the by now familiar list of these - finite resources, pollution, overpopulation and so on. (Incidentally, there is one absurd mistake in the gloomy forecast. It is said that in the year 2000 there will be 2,500 megacities, each with between ten and twelve million inhabitants. This adds up to a staggering twenty-five billion people in these conurbations alone, at least four times the most pessimistic estimates for the entire terrestrial population in that year.)

In any case, there is considerably more ambiguity about the influence of a doctrine of creation on our attitudes to Nature than is apparent in Moltmann's discussion. His main thesis is that a true interpretation of the Christian doctrine of creation would lead to a more responsible attitude towards Nature. But more than one interpretation is possible. Only twenty years ago, the American theologian Harvey Cox wrote an immensely popular book, *The Secular City* (1965), in which he

claimed that the doctrine of creation played a major part in the rise of modern science and technology, for it taught that the world is not, as paganism had believed, a divine being, but the product (even the somewhat arbitrary product) of God's will. By "de-divinizing" the world, the doctrine of creation made it available for scientific investigation and technological exploitation. Does not Genesis in fact represent God as saying to the first human couple, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth"? Are not all ecological ills, from overpopulation to the extinction of rare animals, already encapsulated in that fatalistic command?

Moltmann rejects this interpretation. It arises, he believes, from thinking of God in too pronouncedly monarchical terms as the transcendent ruler of the universe, and from an overemphasis on the difference between God and world. At this point Moltmann's argument could have been strengthened by introducing some natural theology. Instead, however, he interprets the God of the creation stories of Genesis in terms of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. Certainly, Christian theologians have been doing this for centuries, but it must raise the question whether two doctrines of creation can be drawn from the Bible - a strictly monotheistic Jewish one, based on straightforward exegesis of Genesis and leading to the understanding of creation embraced by Cox and others, and an alternative Christianized version favoured by Moltmann, in which the creator is understood as Trinity and the transcendent Father is joined by the incarnate Son and the immanent Spirit. This view teaches a much more intimate relation between God and world. Now the world is no longer seen as external to the creator but as his dwelling-place. It is therefore to be treated with respect and even reverence by human beings. This second view is one that is likely to encourage a more protective and responsible attitude to the environment, but we need a more dialectical account of the matter than Moltmann offers. He is right in seeking to correct that view of Nature which sees it as existing only for human exploitation, and he is right to see Nature as a measure of divinity. But eventually we have to come to a right use and even exploitation of Nature for human ends with an appreciation of its integrity and of our own dependence on it. If the view of Nature was one-sided, the new view is in danger of also becoming one-sided, though in the opposite direction.

A major influence in Moltmann's thought has been the work of the neo-Marxist philosopher Ernst Bloch. Though he thought of himself as an atheist, it would probably be more accurate to regard him as some kind of pantheist, and in fact orthodox Marxists accused him of (among other things) "mysticism". He believed that not only human beings but the whole universe is imbued with a self-transcending drive towards some ideal future. In everything there is a striving towards a not yet realized essence. Something close to this philosophy underlies Moltmann's view of Nature. For him, the immanent Spirit of God takes the place of the automatic transcending drive of Bloch's universe, but he agrees with Bloch in seeing the end as not only human well-being but a cosmos which has realized its true essence - in biblical language, a "new heaven and a new earth".

The new heaven and new earth, the final goal of the creative activity of God, is not itself a new stage of history, but lies beyond history. "Past history and the new future", we are told, "no longer belong within the same temporal continuum." This Utopia of the meta-future is symbolized in the Bible by the sabbath. After the six days work of the creation, God "rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done". He simply contemplated his creation and enjoyed it. Likewise human beings "sanctify the sabbath by abstaining from every kind of productive work and by recognising the whole of reality as God's creation". The sabbath is an anticipation in the present of the golden age that is promised at the end of history. What is of interest here is not only the Utopianism which Moltmann takes over from Bloch, but also the importance which he attaches to contemplation; for in the past Moltmann has usually been considered an activist and anti-Platonist.

Trevor Williams's *Form and Vitality in the World and God* addresses the reader in a very different theological idiom. Here are no flights of Utopian fancy or speculations about the beginning and end of history; but there is a patient wrestling with many of the stubborn problems which confront Christian theology today. The reliability of the Bible and the authority of the Church are interpreted, the significance of Jesus Christ is seen as problems of a more practical kind concerning the Church and its place in contemporary culture. Perhaps the book has attempted to deal with too many topics within the scope of a single book, but virtually everything that he says about the Christian faith is clear, reasonable and attractive.

Instead of God: A pragmatic reconsideration of beliefs and values by James Hamblin (224pp. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1985, £12.95, 0 7145 2633 8) challenges those dubious, of religion, and insufficiently answered by science, to work out directions for themselves and responsibility for the world.

Colloquially, these may be seen as God among the "pagans", God in the mainstream theistic religions and God in the offshoot cults.

Of high significance in the first category are the findings of anthropologists in some — though not many — African societies, where a spiritual entity of supreme quality has been recognized. A classic example is that given by Jomo Kenyatta in his anthropological study of his own people, whom he called the Gikuyu, in *Facing Mount Kenya* (1938). Kenyatta stated, "The Gikuyu believe in one God, Ngai, the creator and giver of all things." He went on to say that Ngai had no father, mother or companion of any kind, lived in the sky but had temporary homes on earth, in the mountains, where he might rest when he brought blessings and punishments to the people. In prayers and sacrifices the Gikuyu turn towards Mount Kenya, which is believed to be Ngai's official residence and is accordingly known as "mountain of brightness" and thought to be holy. Ngai, invisible to ordinary mortal eyes, is called upon at the birth, initiation, marriage and death of a person. He is thus plausibly, from his combination of supreme qualities, described as God. But Ngai is a distant being and takes but little interest in people in their daily walks of life and must never be pestered by frequent appeal. And he is not accessible to individual prayer. Only a family group with the father at its head may supplicate him.

In other words, he is God for social units, not for persons. It may be asked whether Kenyatta, in his desire to represent the Gikuyu with dignity in the face of Western pressure and proselytization, did not exaggerate the role of Ngai as God. But Kenyatta's position is supported by comparable evidence from other African peoples — from E. E. Evans-Pritchard on the Nuer, S. F. Nadel on the Nupe, Godfrey Lienhardt on the Dinka and John Middleton on the Lugbara.

The picture of a supreme being thus presented is not a conventional Western one. It is a deity rather than a theist picture, that is, the supreme being is regarded as the ultimate source of reality, including humanity and human institutions, but one who does not often intervene in natural and human processes by way of voluntary acts of care or salvation. God may be the ground of moral value, but there is no general expression equivalent to "God is love". God is either otiose and indifferent or has a general benevolence which must be sharpened into supportive action for men, not by right thoughts but by rituals of propitiation. The location of God is vague. He is usually thought to be not in the terrestrial world, though the Lugbara speak of a transcendent God in the sky, and an immanent other half on earth, with wives and many children, who is responsible for the inspiration of diviners, for the power of rainmakers and for all death. Even God's personality is in question. Most accounts are in anthropomorphic terms, but the syntax of some African languages, being genderless, leaves it open whether God is being referred to as "He", "She", or "It". Such a problem may not disturb modern Western theologians, for whom a concept of "modes of being" may cater for such difficulties.

But a semantic problem remains over God's name. In an African context, what is presented as a "pagan" religious concept may have been influenced by ideas from Islam — as with the Nupe. Then an anthropologist's own experience may have predisposed him to accept a theistic labelling — as perhaps Evans-Pritchard did with the Nuer *kwoti*. But the issue is a delicate one. Lienhardt, a sensitive interpreter of African religious thought, has described how the Dinka of the Sudan claim to encounter spirits of various kinds, which he glossed as "powers". A common Dinka term *nhialic* is used in some contexts where Lienhardt says it could be suitably translated as God, with reference to prayers and sacrifices offered to a father and creator. Yet the connotation of *nhialic* is much wider than this, embracing notions of the sky above, and of a collectivity of spirits. So Lienhardt concluded that to use the word God for such Dinka concepts would raise difficult metaphysical and semantic problems for which there is no Dinka parallel. His solution was to use the term *Divinity*; he argued that this, with a capital letter, can convey the idea not only of a being but also of a nature and existence with less personal mean-

ing. Lienhardt's major study of Dinka religion is entitled *Divinity and Experience* (1961).

Anthropologists have shown growing boldness in tackling the concept of God in the mainstream theistic religions. Their studies have tended to refer to the divine in two ways: how concepts of God are formulated at the folk level rather than at the level of scholarly exegesis, and how the pragmatic experiences of a congregational worshipper relate to the theological pattern of ideas. Contributions to an understanding of the idea of God in the Christian faith have been fairly restricted. Long ago, there was a path-breaking study, *Christian Myth and Ritual* (1933), by E. O. James, who was both an anthropologist and in holy orders as a Professor of the Philosophy and History of Religion. In *The Family of God* (1959), W. Lloyd Walmer, an anthropologically trained sociologist, produced a lively analysis of the meaning and functions of the symbolism of Christian life in the United States. Recently, there have been intriguing studies, by the late Victor Turner and Edith Turner, of pilgrimage as a means of securing a closer relation to God's grace (*Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture: Anthropological perspectives*, 1978). Much comparative analysis of ideas of spirit and divinity in complex faiths appears in *Religious Organisation and Religious Experience* (1982), edited by John Davis. And going to the roots of assertions about the divine, there has been anthropological inquiry into what is meant by such expressions as "I believe...". But direct analysis of the concept of God has been rare, though I myself have made some comment from a comparative humanist point of view upon the notions of gods and God. In the Islamic field, anthropologists have reflected upon the way in which a pious Muslim must try to lead a virtuous life in an imperfect world. The religious obligations of the Faithful to Allah, as interpreted with finality by the Prophet, are mandatory and all-embracing. They involve a tussle between the faculty of reason implanted by Allah and the passions and interests which animate every man and woman. Anthropologists have explored the varying interpretations of the notion of God's will in relation to the actions of men,

Counter cults

A. David Jones

PETER B. CLARKE
Black Paradise: The Rastafarian movement
085030 428 8
KIM KNOTT
My Sweet Lord: The Hare Krishna movement
0 85030 432 6
112pp. Wellingborough: Aquarian.
Paperback, £5.99 each.

Peter B. Clarke's *Black Paradise: The Rastafarian movement* and Kim Knott's *My Sweet Lord: The Hare Krishna movement* are the first in a series, edited by Clarke, of short books on new religious movements in Britain. He claims there have been 500 of these since the end of the Second World War. The best-known include the Rastafarians, Rajneeshis, Hare Krishna, Transcendental Meditation, Scientology, Moonies and Divine Light. The series aims to describe the organization, beliefs and practice of each movement in a simple, straightforward way; and to explain why each movement appeals to its members.

The Rastafarians do not have a written doctrine or a formal organization. Their beliefs and practices centre on "Babylon", the world of white people which took them from Africa, sold them as slaves and now reviles them. Babylon is rejected as heartless and unnatural. Haile Selassie (Rastafari) is recognized as the Living God who will eventually redeem black people by repatriating them to Africa, where they will live a natural co-operative life of agrarian plenty and enjoyable civilization.

Clarke describes the Rastafarian roots in the Back to Africa movement of Marcus Garvey and in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, and their subsequent history. The Italian conquest of Ethiopia and the eventual death of Haile Selassie changed the movement in certain respects. Some members still take the beliefs literally; others now take them in allegory. All

and the meaning of prayer as an aid to carrying out God's will. To a pious Muslim villager, prayer is not the means of making ritual requests to God, but a sacred duty, and an instrument of self-control in the battle of reason against passion in the desired "surrender to God".

A marked feature of religious movement during the last four centuries or so has been the spread of major "universal" faiths through much of a "pagan" world. Anthropologists have seen this not as a simple conversion from darkness to light, the replacement of gods by God, but as a complex process of transfer of belief and ritual. They have studied strategies of the transfer, why people convert, how the new doctrines relate to the old, and what changes in the social structure are associated with an acknowledgement of a new divine Father and Lord. The anthropology of folk religion presents a kaleidoscopic picture of many different combinations of ideas of God and indigenous beliefs, when the data are interpreted in sociological rather than in theological terms.

Particularly striking have been the many anthropological studies of religious cults outside the established mainstream Churches — cults called, not too accurately, chiliastic or millenarian. These range from the independent Bantu Churches of South Africa to the voodoo cults of the Caribbean and the "cargo cults" of Melanesia. Such cults are often marked by a theological tolerance in which God is assisted by local spirits of varying power, and they interpret the divine in terms of personal experience, very closely, in dreams, ecstasy, glossolalia. Social parameters of the cults are much in evidence. There are European and Asian analogies, but in Africa, the Caribbean and Melanesia the congregations are black, they retain many indigenous elements in their ritual, such as dancing or healing techniques, and traditional values such as the propriety of polygamy may still remain. Essentially, they are asserting a cultural appropriation of God. Their members can feel God personally — sometimes their prophet leader claims to be God. "Jehovah is ours, our very own" has been one cry. Long before the recognition of "indigenous theology" or a "black

look upon Africa as a once proud and civilized place which has been ruined by Babylon. Eventually Babylon will serve the blacks.

Truth, in the Rastafari system, is to be found by examining your own experience. God can be discovered in yourself. The Bible is a source of knowledge, and the two practices for which the Rastafarians are best known, the wearing of dreadlocks and the use of ganja, are justified by reference to it. Dreadlocks assert cultural identity, and ganja is a source of revelation, healing and entertainment. Jesus Christ, the living Son of God of two thousand years ago, was not a European. In Babylon, anyone who is not a European white, is black. Jesus Christ was an African.

Clarke describes the Rastafarians with great sympathy. He likens them to Jews — dispersed, reviled, used, feared and believing in a Promised Land. Occasionally one of them comes forth and is widely acclaimed as an artist (for instance, the singer Bob Marley).

The Hare Krishna movement is very different. It is a recognizable part of the Hindu religion, with a hierarchical organization and a set of texts based on the *Bhagavad Gita*. Worship of Krishna and rejection of the material world are central. The movement demands an austere life-style: no sex except for procreation within marriage, no gambling, no drugs (including alcohol, coffee and tobacco), no meat and no personal wealth. The daily round of devotion begins at 4.30 am. Awareness is cultivated by chanting and meditation; and perception of Krishna as the supreme God-head is the ultimate goal.

ISKCON (the International Society for Krishna Consciousness) began in America in the 1960s and spread to Europe and India. In Britain there are several thousand members and followers, many of them Indian. They run restaurants, publish books, trade, and grow vegetables. Twenty years ago they recruited from those who had been liberated from the 1960s

liberation theology", just as the poet Cullen wrote of the "Black Christ", so these cults were presenting God in a new light. He was not the God of the Europeans, with their economic and political domination, but a God who could help the repressed people to an independent life of their own. (Analogies with the rise of Christianity are not far to seek.) Shot through with racial tension, the "cargo cults" in particular have been presented by some anthropologists, perhaps over-dramatically, as incipient revolutionary movements. On the other hand, they have sometimes seemed to be trying to lift themselves by their religious bootstraps, seeking by cultic means to get what they could not achieve on the pragmatic economic and political plane. But what in effect the cults have been saying is that self-help is an essential part of the redemptive process, even if it means a radical reinterpretation of God's nature and role.

For those who believe in God in any conventional way, much anthropological analysis of the idea of the divine may seem like a kind of cosmic *chutzpah*, a gigantic imperipence which might move the Almighty to amusement or compassion. But whether one believes in God as the ultimate reality, or in him as a political power-source, or as the final principle of love, or thinks as I do that God is a product of human imagination and yearning to provide some solution to the problems of existence, the findings of anthropologists can be of service. Anthropological enquiry has broadened our knowledge of the concept of God, and of the approaches made to God. Independently of "indigenous theology" and perhaps more forcefully, it has studied the meaning of God over a great social range, and explored the way in which these meanings relate to the different structures of society. It has also shown the inadequacy of an ethnocentric understanding of God. Many Christian missionaries and other servants of God have discovered that their message is truly meaningful only when the idea of the deity can be seen to have direct relevance to local community conditions. If anthropological studies of the divine have no other value, they may suggest more sensitivity and more humility towards the different ways in which people understand God.

"counter-culture"; today, new members come from a wide range of backgrounds. One of the difficulties they face is that authority goes to males, which is a stumbling-block to some who are drawn towards their temples.

These two books succeed as introductions to two religious movements. The authors are keen to refute popular images of cults and sects as exploitative groups which brainwash gullible youngsters into surrendering themselves to the dictates of the leaders. Kim Knott is quick to point out that organizations which campaign against "cults", such as the Deo Gloria Trust and FAIR (Family Action Information and Rescue), sometimes subject those they endeavour to save to worse treatment than they would experience within a religious movement. The Press gives them very mixed coverage.

The books fail to point up the hypocrisy and dubious morality which can be parts of any movement. This is very marked in Knott's book; she does not mention the exploitative scorn shown by Hare Krishna people towards the "Karmy" world which, as traders, they attempt to "rip off", nor does she make anything of their competitive sales perks. There is a strong streak in ISKCON of reproducing the very aspects of modern society which they reject. *My Sweet Lord* gives no hint of this. Nor does Clarke dwell on the racist implications of a belief in a Black Paradise, in which blacks and the chosen people and whites serve them.

Volumes Thirty-one and Thirty-two of the Ancient Indian Tradition and Mythology series, published by Motilal Banarsidass, Bazar Road, Delhi, under the general editorship of J. L. Shastri, and jointly sponsored by UNESCO and the Indian Government, contain an annotated translation by S. Venkatesubrahmanya Iyer of the *Varaha Purana*. The series aims to make all the Puranas available in English.

God and psychiatry

R. D. Laing

I am invited to write on God, from the point of view of a preaching and theoretical psychiatrist. But we can't really discuss the subject sensibly, unless we have at least some vague consensus about what we mean by "God" and by "psychiatry". Let's take the easy one first. I am a psychiatrist. I can define God only by what he is not. He is not any definition I can think of. He is neither male nor female, nor both, nor neither, nor neither neither. Simply, he is not named any name we care to give him, including "Him". At the same time, I believe in God, because I can't possibly see how a Being beyond all my imagination, concepts or visions of such Being-as-Such, cannot, and not be. For want of a better word, I believe in God.

I have much more difficulty with "What is psychiatry?" Psychiatry covers many different practices and theories and one ought to be able to say what psychiatry is, and what it is not, unequivocally. In a way one ought not to presume to be able to say what God is, unequivocally. All psychiatrists will agree that all psychiatrists do not see psychiatry the same way, but the majority of psychiatrists see it as what the most influential psychiatric manual today, adopted all over the Western psychiatric world, *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of the American Psychiatric Association*, Third Edition (henceforth referred to as *DSM III*), says it is.

Many psychiatrists and some psychiatric departments make no bones about the fact that they do not like *DSM III* and would like to do without it. But, to operate within the global psychiatric main frame, all psychiatrists must comply with it. To try to say something about God and psychiatry I shall take *DSM III* as a one in point, because I think that almost all psychiatrists would agree that it represents the majority psychiatric view world-wide, not only in the United States.

DSM III lists many "criteria", which in different permutations and combinations comprise existing known mental disorders. These include: refusal to maintain body weight over a minimal normal weight for age and height; magical thinking, insistence by superstitiousness, clairvoyance, telepathy, "sixth sense", "others can feel my feelings"; sensing the presence of a force or person not actually present ("I felt as if my dead mother were in the room with me"); inadequate rapport in face-to-face interaction due to constricted or inappropriate affect — what occasions people to be called "flat", or "cold"; self-dramatization, as in exaggerated expression of emotions; craving for activity and excitement; overreaction to minor events; irrational, angry outbursts or tantrums; being perceived by others as shallow and lacking genuineness, even if superficially warm and charming; behaviour that is egocentric, self-indulgent and inconsiderate of others, or vain and demanding; decreased effectiveness or productivity at school, work or home; loss of interest in, or enjoyment of, sex; talking less than usual; fearfulness, and crying; marked impairment in role functioning as wage-earner, student, or home-maker; markedly peculiar behaviour (for example, collecting garbage, talking to oneself in public, or hoarding food); marked impairment in personal hygiene; and preening.

DSM III actually has no word for these (shall we say?) items, as such, in themselves, before they become criteria of mental disorder. The item "Poverty of Content of Speech", when in combination with at least one other item, becomes a criterion of a "Schizophrenic mental disorder", a dire disorder to suffer from, with many possible social, economic, legal consequences in most countries.

DSM III imputes to a person that his or her feelings, thoughts, impulses, actions, are not his or her own. They are not integral aspects of himself as a responsible, interesting, thinking, feeling, acting person, but they are products of a mentally disordered process. The patient is not a person suffering from measles. He, she, the person is a patient suffering from his/her own thoughts, feelings, impulses, actions. The fact that many persons feel that their thoughts are taken away from them is named a bizarre delusion of persecution.

The act of taking away, in theory, and in practice by "treatment", a person's thoughts, feelings, actions, is not named as bizarre persecution, but as atheoretical diagnosis and psychiatric treatment. The fact that you feel persecuted by such treatment means that you need more treatment not to feel persecuted by the treatment that is persecuting you. (*DSM III* has a name "psychosis" for a mental disorder it computes on to people who have a very different sense of reality from the minds behind *DSM III*, but no name, no concept, no description, of that state of mind which it manifests in naming someone psychotic.)

DSM III's description and example of "Poverty of Content of Speech" bear directly on the question of God and religion. They read as follows:

Speech that is adequate in amount but conveys little information because of vagueness, empty repetition or use of stereotyped or obscure phrases. The interviewer may observe that the individual has spoken at length but has not given adequate information to answer a question. Alternatively, the individual may give enough information to answer the question, but require many words to do so, so that his or her lengthy reply can be summarized in a sentence or two. The term poverty of content of speech is generally not used when the speech is, for the most part, not understandable (incoherence).

Example: Interviewer: "OK. Why is it, do you think, that people believe in God?" Patient: "Well, first of all because, He is the person that, is their personal savior. He walks with me and talks with me. And uh, the understanding that I have, a lot of peoples they don't really know their own personal self. Because they ain't, they all, just don't know their own personal self. They don't, know that He uh, seemed like to me, a lot of 'em don't understand that He walks and talks with them. And uh, show 'em their way to go. I understand also that, every man and every lady, is just not pointed in the same direction. Some are pointed different. They go in their separate ways. The way that Jesus Christ wanted 'em to go. Myself, I am pointed in the ways of uh, know-

ing right from wrong, and doing it. I can't do any more, or not less, than that."

However rich or poor the content of this reply is taken to be, is going to be influenced greatly by how in tune with it one feels oneself to be. I feel myself completely in tune with it, though I'm not sure I agree with every word of it, or believe every word of it. But I think it is an excellent reply. It comes from an unedited tape transcript. Anyone who has experience of taped interviews knows how much fluff one usually has to edit out. I would feel blest if I came out with an unedited response to the question, "Why, do you think, do some people believe in God?" as coherent and succinct, getting right to the point, as this patient, whose response is held to be indicative of one of the worst mental disorders, one of the most undesirable, disordered states of mind there is, schizophrenic psychosis.

No one who believed, or respected the belief that one believed, in God because He was their own personal saviour (after Anselm, the most impeccably orthodox Christian reply to this question), would even begin to dream, I imagine, of considering that there was anything remotely disordered in that utterance, in quantity (amount) or quality (content). There are many psychiatrists who believe that they believe in God because he has made himself known to them as their own personal saviour. Would they hope to give a very much more cogent reply?

Both within and without the medical profession, psychiatry is probably the branch of medicine which is most controversial. Modern medicine, and psychiatry in particular, is an object of sociological, anthropological, even philosophical and theological interest. Psychiatry has many mansions and all sorts of

Rising above silence

Peter Hebblethwaite

MICHAEL MOTT
The Seven Mountains of Thomas Merton
600pp. Sheldon. £19.50.
0 85969 482 8

The Cistercian monk Thomas Merton — Father Louis in religion — is a cult-figure in the United States. He has been virtually canonized by the peace movement. He is a marvellous subject for a biography because his life was so full of mysteries and because he wrote so much. Did he have an affair with his nurse, "S"? Was his death really an accident? The answer to both questions appears to be yes.

Michael Mott's book, *The Seven Mountains of Thomas Merton*, has a strange history. In 1967, the year before he died, Merton set up

the Thomas Merton Trust and assigned his private journals to it. No one else was to see them until twenty-five years after his death. They will be available in 1993. In 1968, however, the trustees appointed John Howard Griffin as biographer and gave him access to the diaries. By 1977 Griffin was too ill to continue, and Michael Mott was selected to complete what is in effect the "official" biography. Mott, a Professor of English, is not a Catholic, and did not know Merton. This was intended to produce "objectivity", a very necessary precaution since Merton's innumerable friends have argued about who knew him best and quarrelled over the meaning of his life. So Mott is the only person, apart from the trustees, to have read the journals, which cover the years 1956-68.

He has made fine use of them. Merton was a paradoxical man, a garrulous hermit, a sen-

Psalm for Supersunday

SUNDAY is for family and fellowship, and the gates of the Supermarket are open to the faithful, to families and fellows.

For this is the House of Supergod, prepared by the hands of the Supersons of men, mindful of families and fellows and their faithful credit cards.

There on the right you shall find bread, white and brown; sliced and unsliced; and on the left new wine in new bottles, made to make men glad. Vinegar is displayed elsewhere and, in Toiletries, sponges.

This was somebody's flesh and blood, they say, speaking metaphorically. The Supermarket, as likewise the lesser clergy, has set its face against metaphors, save in promotional literature. The beef is immaculately presented, not concealed; the lamb will never rise again.

Sunday is for the family and for togetherness; for babies and fresh farm eggs in gleaming chariots, with frozen fishes and hot spices, Golden Wonder and milk and honey, hyssop and Fairy Snow and ointments for the feet.

Yet those who steal on the sabbath shall be punished twofold; but blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit Special Offers. Families that pay together stay together.

The Supermarket is forever full; voices are raised in rejoicing and praise, glorious things are spoken of it.

Bow your heads as you leave, past the tabernacle of cash registers, and the wise and calculating virgins. Harken to the sound of bells!

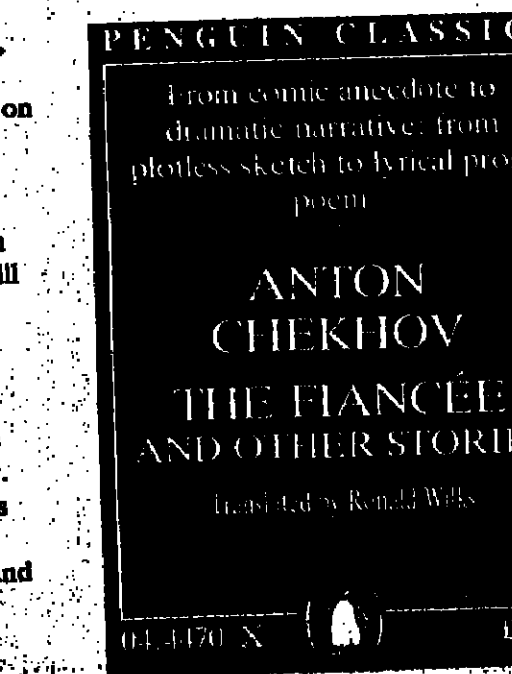
D. J. ENRIGHT

ins and outs. It is a multi-national global network with extensive economic, cultural, political, religious, technological ramifications. Cardiology, neurology, public health, obstetrics, etc, may change in character or style, yet it is easy enough to say what cardiology is, what obstetrics is, what neurology is, without getting hyperproblematic, or metaphysical, or "difficult" about it. Neurology is that branch of medicine, a speciality, which studies and treats disorders of the central and peripheral nervous system. But when anyone, a neurologist, say, or a cardiologist, comes to ask "What is psychiatry?", there is no such simple answer.

For there is something different about *DSM III*. If one is a cardiologist, obstetrician, neurologist, pathologist, one must be struck, on reading *DSM III*, that this is not quite like what one would expect if one consulted a manual of pathology, in the ordinary sense. What *DSM III* seems to be is a comprehensive compendium of thoughts, feelings, experiences, especially unusual experiences, impulses, actions, conduct, which are deemed undesirable, and should be put a stop to, in our culture. It is so all-inclusive that most items of what all the world over at all times and places were deemed to be ordinary manifestations of ordinary human minds, speech and conduct, are ruled out. We, as we used to take ourselves to be, are to be cultured out, to be replaced by a homogenized creature I can hardly recognize as a human being. All sorts of undesired thoughts, feelings, speech, conduct, self-presentation are ruled out here, some "due to" "organic" conditions, most "due to" God knows what. I recognize myself, torn into items, strewn over almost every page. I hate it. I fear it. What has this sort of psychiatry to do with God, or God to do with it? I don't know. That's the difficulty I have tried to share with you.

suast ascetic, an antieric monk, an American at odds with America, a politically committed contemplative, a Christian with a yearning for Zen. Mott conceals nothing, treats Merton's poetry seriously and rebukes him when need be. For example, in 1967 Merton foolishly imagined he was going to be elected Abbot, thus demonstrating "a mastery degree of misreading and general ineptitude". The remark has perhaps a more general application.

The title needs a word of explanation for British readers. Merton's best-selling autobiography was called *The Seven Storey Mountain*. This farewell to Europe and a life of artistic dissipation caused a great stir when it came out in 1948. For the British edition, however, the title was changed to *Elected Silence* (a quotation from G. M. Hopkins), and on the advice of Evelyn Waugh the lush, over-indulgent prose was cut by a third. Mott's title refers to the seven mountains which dominated Merton's life, from Canigou in the Pyrenees, in whose shadow he was born, to the sacred and symbolic Kanchenjunga — Merton was at a conference with Buddhist monks in Thailand when he was electrocuted by an electric fan.



Behind the lines

Lorna Sage

Macmillan threw a good humoured but possibly rather regretful party at the Sussex University bookshop last week "to commemorate Rudyard Kipling on the 50th anniversary of his death" - which signals, of course, his emergence from copyright. Lord Macmillan wasn't able to come - not for that reason (they hastened to say) but because he was recovering from minor surgery. And anyway, perhaps the really significant anniversary was ten years ago, when Kipling's daughter Elsie, Mrs George Bambridge, died. By all accounts she policed his reputation with exemplary vigilance; and since her passing the release of the family papers, which went to the National Trust and thence into the custody of the University of Sussex library, has enabled scholars slowly to untidy the canon by adding (for instance) the kind of hand to mouth apprentice work that blurs and destabilizes anyone's image.

The various Kipling events that formed a kind of millepied to the Brighton Festival seem to be all about this dispersed, uncollected Kipling. Craig Raine, who is editing a new selection of the stories for Faber (a companion volume for Eliot's selection of the verse) celebrated the multifarious "voices" Kipling got on to the page. Thomas C. Pinney (Pomona College, California), who edited earlier this year *Kipling's India: Uncollected sketches 1884-1888* (302pp, Macmillan, £25, 0 333 38467 9), speculated suspiciously about Kipling's contribution to "the tide of misplaced paper that flows around the world": manuscripts probably lost forever (like the mysterious youthful novel called *Mother Maurin*); the anonymous and pseudonymous pieces written for the *Civil and Military Gazette* in Lahore and *The Pioneer* in Allahabad, now identifiable through four scrap books that form part of Mrs Bambridge's legacy; the hints and outlines and almost certainly unwritten projects alluded to in various letters; and phantoms of after-dinner speeches on four continents. Andrew Rutherford, who has concentrated on the verse (*Early Verse by Rudyard Kipling 1879-1889: Unpublished, uncollected and rarely collected poems*, 497pp, Oxford University Press, £19.50, 0 19 812323 X) stressed how poems were sparked off by news stories and topical scandals - all the Grub Street bric-a-brac and

bricolage which tied them to times and places, and which the "Definitive Edition" left out or obscured.

The effect is not surprising enough to be rated as a revaluation - more a matter of uncovering byways and obliquities. Thus Geoffrey Hemstedt (at a day school organized by the Centre for Continuing Education) explored Kipling's various versions of brotherhood and belonging in terms of the prestige of "special knowledges" and their codes and argots, and suggested that perhaps John le Carré should be seen as the true inheritor of this culture of male freemasonry and passwords; meanwhile Sandra Kemp argued that there was more to Kipling's women, especially late on, than met the eye, and that the "woman-book" which he mentioned in an 1895 letter ("I dream of doing novels with women in them some fine day") and which figured in Professor Pinney's list of phantom projects is possibly lurking around in bits in *Limits and Renewals* (1932). Complexity has set in - and nowhere more strikingly than in the pages of the *Kipling Journal*, where military men used to disport themselves, now the domain of the Diplomatic Corps in the person of editor George Webb. Mr Webb accommodates the passion for passwords all right - the latest issue features a splendidly esoteric correspondence on the question of exactly how the word "Stepney" should have come to be slang for both "spare wheel" and "fancy woman" - but also includes straightforwardly academic articles that would have annoyed the captains and colonels no end ("Imperialism in 'The Bridge-builders': metaphor or reality?", and that sort of thing). All in all, it's perhaps a bit like the moment when the D'Oyly Carte lost their monopoly on performances of Gilbert and Sullivan - an institution dissolving, the end of an authorized version.

Indeed, the uncollected Kipling turns out to be full of Gilbert and Sullivan echoes - improvisations, and parodies on parodies:

These are the ballads, tender and meek,
Sung by a bard with his tongue in his cheek . . .

Perhaps the best description of the new material is his own review of Yule and Burnell's 1886 *Hobson-Jobson: a glossary of Anglo-Indian words*: "A glorified olla podrida of fact, fancy, sub-note, reference, cross-reference, and quotations innumerable . . ." (*The Kipling Journal* is published quarterly by the Kipling Society, minimum subscription for individual membership £12; enquiries to the

Secretary, Kipling Society, c/o Royal Commonwealth Society, 18 Northumberland Avenue, London, WC2N 5BJ.)

* * *

The story of Her Majesty's Stationery Office is the story of the apotheosis of the list, the very poetry of inventory: ". . . paper, pens, ink, wax, sand, tape, penknives, scissors, parchment, and a great variety of other articles . . .". This was Horace Walpole's pre-Stationery Office list, which earned him (for the sinecure office of "Usher of the Exchequer") a pittance of £5,000 per annum in the 1780s; and the office's current booklet on Her Majesty's desiderata ("Selling to HMSO") carries on the tradition, with evocative, closely printed columns of goods and services bought:

Self-adhesive cellulose
vinyl and lithographic tape
Self-adhesive sign
materials, letters and
numbers
Staple presses and staples
Tags, laces and elastic
circuits . . .

Supply has a feminine feel; "Technical Services", on the other hand, is incisive, mean even:

Folding machines
Gullottines
Shrink wrapping machines
Thread sewing machines
Wire stitching machines
Spare machine parts and
modifications . . .

HMSO has been celebrating its survival - touch and go in 1980 - with four exhibitions in London, Norwich, Edinburgh and (finally) the Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester (June 16-28) demonstrating their new "leaner decentralised mode". They have a new logo, a new "house" colour (blue), and run themselves as a Trading Fund with a staff 40 per cent smaller than six years ago. Burke (who first tried unsuccessfully to reform Stationery - as it was then spelt - in 1780) would doubtless have approved, although he would have found the whole Hansard business thoroughly tedious, of course: it wasn't until the 1830s that Parliamentary debates were published with Parliament's blessing. Before that, people like Cobbett leaked them to the masses; indeed it was Cobbett who first employed the Hansard family of printers in 1807 (Hansard père is, by coincidence, buried next door to the present HMSO headquarters building, "decentralized" to Norwich in the 1960s).

Hugh Barty-King's history, *Her Majesty's Stationery Office: The story of the first 200 years, 1786 to 1986* (160pp, HMSO, £5, 0 11 701304) is generously anecdotal, though not without the odd touch of asperity concerning the economics of government by paper (or, indeed, computer). Looking back to April Fools' Day 1980 ("Back to Repayment"), Mr Barty-King, for once, allows himself almost an opinion:

There is a moment during James Fenton's account of his sojourn in the Philippines (*Grania* 18, 256pp, Penguin, £3.95, 0 14 00 8482 7) when he and a photographer are crossing the river towards the Presidential Palace. The photographer wants to snap a helicopter seen leaving the Palace, but is put off by a scoffing Fenton, who penitently remarks here - since the machine contained the fleeing Marcoses - "I doubt if Fred will ever forgive me for losing him that shot".

It does indeed seem rough on Fred, as Fenton himself is not the type to miss unique opportunities. He has written recently, in verse or prose, of experiences in Cambodia, Vietnam and Ethiopia; taking note of "fantastic little items" appearing in the English press at the beginning of this year, he set off for Manila in the confident expectation of having "the place to myself". Some weeks later he found a revolution in progress, and himself joining the masses in the Palace (where he picked up one of Imelda's many monogrammed towels). Fenton is not afraid to own up to fear - among the revolutionary crowd he begins the involuntary composition of his own obituary

The purpose of the change . . . was to save the taxpayer money - as had been the purpose of the change from the patent-holder system of 1786. But this time the motivation had an additional dimension. For many there was something morally irresponsible about a government department which did not have to pay for its goods and services, not knowing - and possibly not caring - what they cost. It was "wrong", it was said, that they were not aware of the economic value of what they were receiving free. Not paying was seen to cultivate an unbecoming insouciance.

However, most of the time, the lists speak for him: the publications department asked for, and got, over the years, for example, *How the Flies of the Ethiopian Region, Seats for Female Shop Assistants, The Measurement of Small Holes* (translated from the Russian). And then there's the epic of wastepaper disposal, which in 1862 paid the salaries of the comptroller and his clerks, and which in 1885 necessitated the hiring of fifty-two girls to tear confidential rubbish into strips. There are sub-plots too about HMSO's various clandestine operations: printing money in 1914 (when the red tape was tied white); printing 78 million ration books in 1938-9; purchasing six noiseless typewriters in advance for Sir Winston Churchill's funeral and printing many millions of petrol coupons (unused to this day) in 1967. Plus the two-hundred-year battle with new technology (a nice quotation from William IV at the opening of the new Privy Council in 1830: "You have damned bad pens here"). The story of the first 200 years is suspiciously good value, and splendidly produced, a "blue book" with a difference. And yes,

Rope, cord, string and
Twine

still figure among the lists, along with distasteful raters.

* * *

Finding sponsors for literary prizes seems to be easier than people once thought. Keeping them, on the other hand, may prove more tricky. The Crime Writers' Association wittily landed Securicor backing five years ago for their Gold and Silver Dagger Awards. But despite the high standards of the winners these days (the 1985 Gold Dagger to non-fiction went to Brian Masters's *Killing for Company*, the fictional Gold Dagger to Paula Gillingham's *Monkey Puzzle*), so that the CWA has no doubt things are getting better all the time ("We used to wonder about giving a Retrievable Gold Dagger Award to someone whose second novel didn't maintain the promise of the first"), rumour has it that Securicor are thinking of pulling out. The problem, obviously, is publicity: the more prizes, the less likely to go round for the sponsors. Still, the CWA is forging ahead with the Cartier Diamond Dagger ("for a Lifetime's Service to Crime Writing") which was presented to Eric Ambler at their dinner at Armoury House on May 1. Perhaps this handsome trophy (a silver open book with a dagger stuck in it) will tempt some enterprising bandit, and get them in the papers after all.

nor indeed to likes and dislikes, moods, frustrations, failures; his journalism is highly personal, which succeeds brilliantly while he has a strong subject in hand (as on this occasion, and, even more, in his account of the fall of Saigon, *Grania* 15) but seems forced and self-conscious when he falls to get near the action, as happened in Ethiopia. This unadmitted manner of self-presentation is reflected in the episodic, impressionistic prose style, which occasionally reads as if taken straight from the reporter's notebook. But such flaws are part of his individuality. Apart from Fenton's special gifts, one reason we are unlikely to read many pieces as good as this, on the Philippines or anywhere else, is that few British journalists - American ones are different, and so, therefore, are American journalists - are willing to grant writers the space. "The Snap Revolution", with integrated photographs, is about half the length of an average book; perhaps James Fenton will supply a second part after he becomes South-East Asia correspondent for the *Independent* newspaper, when it is launched in October.

James Campbell

Letters

Anorexia Nervosa

Sir, - In her review of *Hunger Strike* (April 25), Susie Orbach's book on anorexia nervosa, Dana Breen makes the usual psychotherapeutic and universalist case of "the more general human condition of having to negotiate inequality, comparison with others, and progression through the life cycle". The final common path of anorexia may be common to a variety of situations (including severe depression), but the social values and onset which characterize the reaction are firmly rooted in contemporary male expectations of female body morphology: currently somewhat paedophilic - baby-faced, slightly built, with long legs. And here lies the complexity of the reaction, in that the woman outwardly conforms to male sexual preferences while renouncing her own adult sexuality and, through returning to the role of the child, gains some slight negotiating power and freedom for herself in her family.

If anorexia nervosa is some type of universal solution, we should expect to find it in other societies and at other times. As your review of Rudolph M. Bell's *Holy Anorexia* (in the same issue) showed, we can attempt to find similar patterns in all situations. Nevertheless, the particular concern with dieting for its own sake in association with the slender body form as attractive seems to have first occurred in Britain and France last century. Anorexia was virtually unknown in Japan until recently and is seldom found in the Third World. Interestingly, it is relatively common among both sexes in China, where there are strong social pressures against a plump "landlord" body build.

To consider anorexia nervosa solely as fear or "pathology" is unfair: women in the West lose their jobs if they put on weight; successful businessmen are more slender than the average (and also the wives of successful men). The anorexic demonstrates in her body a certain social value carried to extremes. As Orbach suggests, there is a parody hero. And not only in anorexia. Agoraphobia is something to do with a woman's place being the home, is it not?

ROLAND LITTLEWOOD,
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Lodge Road, Birmingham.

American Laureate

Sir, - Lydia Gerend claims that "women, unlike men, have the option of choosing between literature and motherhood" (*Letters*, May 9). When faced with the counter-examples of Sylvia Plath and Adrienne Rich, she takes the line that they did not remain mothers. What line would she take with Anne Stevenson, Carol Rumens, Gillian Clarke, Medbh McGuckian, Helen Dunmore, Vicki Peavoy, Judith Kazantzis, Selima Hill . . . ? Are they not mothers? Not "really" mothers? Not poets? Not "really" poets?

Of course, such tensions exist: literature / motherhood is one; literature / celibacy another. They may prove productive or stultifying to any particular writer. Do we know how many male writers have not remained "real fathers / husbands"? One poet who acknowledged the conflict is Seamus Heaney in "An Afterwards": "Why could you not have, oh dear, in our years / Unclenched, and come down laughing from your room / And walked the twilight with me and your children." And Francis Bacon's observation at the opening of his essay "Of Marriage and Single Life" is apposite: "He that hath wife and children, hath given hostages to Fortune; for they are impediments to great enterprises, either of virtue or mischief."

So the question is not a narrow one, and the attempt to make of it a narrow and outdated wrangle over women-and-poetry is misguided or worse: it ignores the evidence or slides away from it, and it may actually make it a little harder for the attacked group to believe in themselves, or for their audience to hear that they are there, succeeding.

PENNY MCCARTHY,
14 Mycenae Road, London SE23.

Garry Marker's *Publishing, Printing and the Origins of Intellectual Life in Russia, 1700-1800* is published by Princeton University Press at £21.50 and not £32.50, as was stated in the details preceding the TLS review of March 7.

'Moderns and Contemporaries'

Sir, - David Sexton is free to dislike what I write (May 9). He isn't entitled to misrepresent me. His tactic is to say that in *Moderns and Contemporaries* I create straw figures with which to contend, as a result of which I can make "banal" points. Thus I apparently invent "widespread critical agreement that New York isn't of great importance" to *Washington Square* and then show that it matters. According to Sexton this is anyway obvious. But it wasn't obvious to Richard Poirier and F. W. Dupee, two of James's most influential commentators, and had Sexton read my essay he would have seen that it begins from my disagreement with them. Similarly, I am accused of inventing some critical "convictions" about E. A. Robinson in order to challenge them. But the first five pages of that essay deal with his critical reputation, for which I quote chapter and verse. It is true I don't do this when I claim that Peter Porter's remark about poetry being a modest art has excited a good deal of comment, but then someone who needs information on this score is probably not the ideal reviewer of my book. At all events, when the piece was first published in the TLS nobody wrote in to complain that they didn't know who or what I had in mind.

Sexton says that places of first publication are not provided. They are. He implies that my statement that Hardy's reputation has risen at an astonishing rate over the past twenty years is more invention. It isn't. He says I repeatedly announce what I want and don't want. I don't. He is, however, right to say that the proof-reading is inadequate and the book over-priced. But I didn't have much control over the former and I had none at all over the latter.

JOHN LUCAS,
19 Devonshire Avenue, Beeston, Nottingham.

'The Audit of War'

Sir, - I must apologize to Correlli Barnett (*Letters*, May 9). I thought we were academics discussing historical matters, not directors of a declining conglomerate. We must have strayed into your columns by mistake. Further deliberation must be postponed till the next board meeting.

ROBERT SKIDELSKY,
Department of International Studies, University of Warwick, Coventry.

Leigh Hunt and American Readers

Sir, - As William St Clair correctly implies in his review of recent books on Leigh Hunt (April 18), Hunt is more highly regarded as a literary figure in the United States (as well as, I believe, in Canada and Australia, where his biographer Ann Blainey calls from) than he is in the United Kingdom. But St Clair is mistaken in attributing these variations in Hunt's reputation to some kind of colonial patriotism, based on the birthplaces of Hunt's parents. Most Americans who admire Hunt know nothing of his antecedents; if they did, the fact that his parents, like Benedict Arnold, abandoned the United States out of loyalty to King George would not serve as a special recommendation. On the contrary, that there is greater enthusiasm for Hunt, Shelley, E. J. Trelawny, and William Godwin in America than in the kingdom of their birth derives from their relatively egalitarian social principles and from their personal example in defying tyrannies of birth, class, money and arbitrary political and judicial power.

Mr St Clair has, perhaps, spent too little time in the United States to be sufficiently familiar with the recent American journalists and broadcasters whom I used as points of comparison in my defence of Hunt's importance as a literary figure. My point was not that his chief value lay in "his sunny disposition and capacity for fruitful friendships", as St Clair writes, but that as a personal and cultural influence upon great writers of both the Romantic and Victorian eras, as a pioneer in disseminating literature and culture in writings aimed at the larger public, and as an exemplary disinterested and courageous political journalist, he had a great

or positive impact upon the British society of his own time and upon our own intellectual milieu (British and American) than did all but a handful of his contemporaries. His efforts helped to broaden and develop the literate reading public that reached beyond "useful knowledge" to seek humane values in all public endeavours. The very health of the TLS and its collegial rivals on both sides of the Atlantic bears testimony to Hunt's continuing beneficial influence.

DONALD H. REIMAN,
Carl H. Pforzheimer Library, 41 East 42nd Street,
New York, New York 10017.

Hardy's Poems

Sir, - If you miswrite, you are likely to be misread. When Robert Wells wrote (March 7) of the eight separate volumes of Hardy's poems "as they were originally issued by Macmillan" his words could mean only that all eight first saw the light under the imprint of that great firm, which two of them didn't.

Further, if Mr Wells knew that there are to be two further volumes in this series, he should have told us so. It was he who was reviewing the first three volumes, not I; he failed to give us this vital information, and now he blames me for not examining Volume Three.

RUPERT HART-DAVIS,
Manke-in-Swaledale, North Yorkshire.

Rembrandt

Sir, - For my review of two recent books on Rembrandt (May 9) you selected an illustration which you captioned: "A 1631 Rembrandt self-portrait". Following an initial drawing, Rembrandt produced nine different states of print. The drawing and six etched versions, including the two shown above, are reproduced in the book by Pascal Bonafoux which is reviewed on this page.

You have been misled by Bonafoux. Beneath the illustrations he does offer the paragraph (typical of his prose): "A drawing. Nine states of a print." But the correct state of affairs is given in the notes at the end of his volume. *Eleven* states of this etched self-portrait have been identified but no preliminary drawing. Rembrandt appears to have drawn his head directly on to the copper. But on an impression of the second state, now in the British Museum, Rembrandt added to the etched head collar and cloaked shoulders drawn in black chalk. It is this that you reproduced, together with a print of the fifth state. In the Bibliothèque Nationale there is a proof of the fourth state that also has black chalk additions by Rembrandt.

JOHN NASH,
4 Village Way, London SE21.

British Library Lending Services

Sir, - The recent announcement that certain categories of books in the British Library may be loaned out through the national library interlending network must surely provoke reactions of dismay and disbelief. Research in the humanities, like any other scientific research, depends largely on trial and error. The researcher calls for books that he may need only for five minutes to see if they are relevant for his purposes. One of the reasons why foreign scholars are prepared to spend their vacations in uncomfortable hotel bedrooms in Bloomsbury is because they can do their work far more quickly and efficiently in the British Library than anywhere else, because all the books are there.

Perhaps the most astonishing aspect of the new policy is the attitude of mind that it reveals among some of the present administrators of the so-called "Public Services" of the British Library. Do they really think they are doing a public service to the humanities?

T. A. BIRRELL,
English Studies, Erasmuslaan 40, Nijmegen, The Netherlands.

Aldo Busi's *Seminaro sulla gioventù*, which was reviewed in our issue of March 9, will be published in translation next year by Carcanet.

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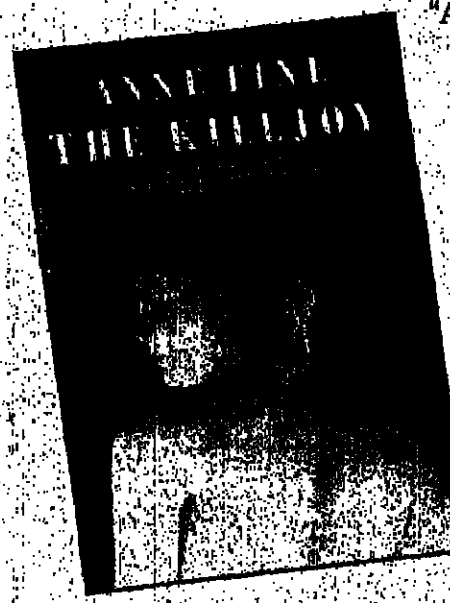
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COMMENTARY

The road to nowhere

Alan Jenkins

Vagabonde
Various Cinemas

A young girl is found frozen to death in a wintry Provencal ditch – no papers, no possessions, just a stiffened corpse, unidentified and unclaimed: a statistic. Agnès Varda's film, at first claiming the privileges of the omniscient narrator but sliding by a deft sleight of camera technique into the uncertainties and contradictions of an investigation, tracks back through the last weeks of the girl's life, recounting one by one, economically and unemphatically, the events and encounters thrown up by her solitary flight *en stop* from unspecified "hazards" from authority of any kind, from the hell of other people, maybe even from herself.

Vignettes, triggered by the recollections of those who gave her lifts or work, bought her drinks, offered her a bed or simply inflicted on her their unwelcome attentions, vary from the straightforwardly comic through the lightly satirical to the savage and shocking; but they have in common authenticity (partly due to excellent performances), a feel for the fine grain and a strong visual sense. The shades and textures of the freezing *Midi*, the depredations of industry and the bleak, eerie beauty of the landscape are rendered with loving care. Through it all trudges Mona ("sans toit ni loi", as the French title puts it – floorless and lawless), her back-pack and leather jacket the only indications that she has once inhabited the world in which human beings go about their normal business: sleeping rough, hitchhiking here or there, for the most part emotionlessly accepting the mutually exploitative nature of her on-the-road relations, occasionally beaming broadly at an unexpected felicity or a proffered *clope*, more characteristically scowling against the coldness of nature and humanity; admitting to a fondness only for pop music and marijuana, too alienated to risk expression of anything more than basic needs ("Je cherche du pain"); amused, wary, full of animal cunning. Mona is so far beyond the reach, not merely of bourgeois politeness but of elementary human reciprocity – except with those as "marginalized" as herself – that in

A sedentary style

Patrick O'Connor

Chess
Prince Edward Theatre

When at the end of *Chess*, Elaine Paige – the Piaf of Old Compton Street – is left alone, a small figure in a white trouser suit, standing on the checkered stage, the point (in case anyone has missed it) that we are all pawns in some big political game, is emphasized one last time.

The world chess champion (Murray Head), who is American and might be bisexual, comes to an Italian border town with his sidekick (Miss Paige), who left Budapest at the age of five in 1956. He has come to play the Russian champ (Tommy Korberg), who may be a nice guy but is probably a heel. From this not unpromising start Benny Andersson, Tim Rice and Björn Ulvæus have spun out a musical event: it cannot really be called a play as there is little dialogue; to call it a musical comedy would be misleading. The stereotyped caricatures of two British diplomats playing tidily-winks and a roomful of loutish, vodka-swilling Russians cannot surely raise much of a laugh, even from this audience. Operetta or opera, even rock, are not in it – the characters do not develop through the music – it extends the singers only in a lyrical sense.

The music is surprisingly old-fashioned. The immensely complicated situations are an excuse for a string of numbers in which simple beat rhythms are overlaid with familiar-sounding ballads and dance songs which nevertheless fail to come up with a real tune and leave the singers with only the words to interpret. These are for the most part delivered with cruel clarity. "Stories like ours have happy endings", or

challenging the values and assumptions of "civilized" society, whether urban or rural, she also challenges us to like her if we dare.

Anarchic and conformist, devoid of charm, desires, projects, thoughts of any kind ("Is it obligatory to have something in your head?" she spits, resisting the authoritarian blandishments of a back-to-the-soil hippy goatherd who tries to come on strong with his *philo*), she is the thing itself, its modern form at least: pure survival instinct and pure self-destructiveness, wrapped tightly round each other in the same bundle of hurt and rage, and heading for trouble. Her spiral down to the awful, stoned lower depths is swift and sad (its end almost unbearably so). The "freedom" others see as the object of her quest is in fact another set of limitations and compromises: everyone, a vagabond, is a kind of boss. In raising, not rebellion exactly, but rejection pure and simple almost to an alternative form of manners, she is both irritating and touching (these quintessentially bourgeois responses are shared by the easier targets among her benefactors or tormentors, who are also baffled, disturbed and vaguely guilty). Telling her story Agnès Varda creates a haunting portrait of hopelessness, a glancingly desolate picture of modern France and a credible account of youth, post-existentialist, post-beat, post-punk youth out too far and in too deep – all of it a long way from the feminist romanticism and naive social concern of some of her earlier films. In Sandrine Bonnaire, as the enigmatic Mona, she has found a star.

The screenplay of Alan Bleasdale's film *No Surrender: A deadpan face* has recently been published by Faber (90pp. £3.95, 0 571 13769 5), who have also published a volume of three plays by Anne Devlin, *Ourselves Alone* which also contains *A Woman Calling* and *The Long March* (192pp. Faber. £4.95, 0 571 13874 8). Recent titles in Methuen's plays series include Barrie Keefe's *Better Times* (44pp. Methuen Theatrescripts. £2.95, 0 413 59670 2) and Larry Kramer's *The Normal Heart* (45pp. Methuen Royal Court Writers Series. £2, 0 413 41470 1) Arthur Miller's *Danger: Memory*, a double bill of *I Can't Remember Anything* and *Clara* (56pp. £3.95, 0 413 41280 6) and Stephen Pollakoff's *Breaking the Silence* (101pp. £3.95, 0 413 41020 X).

"There must be more I could achieve. / I don't have the nerve to try". It would take musicians of genius to make anything of this. As it is, the impression is not of a theatrical event but a huge television spectacular. The boys and girls romp on, the stage revolves and lifts up and down. To reinforce the television feel there is a multi-screen video chessboard on either side of the proscenium, and another that is lowered from the flies from time to time.

The second half moves the characters to Bangkok but by that time one has lost interest in them to such an extent that the audience becomes more of a diversion. Wildly enthusiastic, they have all come for the hype – the albums, the pop video the tee-shirts, the carrier bags and souvenir mugs. They are dressier than, say, the Coliseum regulars, though not up to the standard of those in the £20 seats at the Palladium. It is significant that although the piece lasts for three hours (which would justify a 7 o'clock start at the Royal Opera House) here it starts at eight, allowing time for going home to change before the show.

So what if the story leaves out character, motivation and common sense? One does not expect the musical theatre to tackle subjects of political significance in any depth, but, compared with *Chess*, *The Dancin' Years* or *The Sound of Music* – which the opening Tyrolean chorus obviously sets out to parody – are works of statism.

Naturally, the game itself is not given much time on stage. As in plays about famous writers, the dramatic problem is insurmountable. Sedentary occupations like writing, composition and chess-playing do not provide opportunities for song and dance. It would be difficult to imagine a less suitable activity on which to base a musical.

Alternative Englishmen

John Turner

THOMAS KILROY
Double Cross
Royal Court Theatre

In its Irish context Thomas Kilroy's *tour de force* is a piece of high literary culture, using a theatrical vehicle to explore the character of human beings who invent themselves: it is about Brendan Bracken, Churchill's crony and Minister of Information, who confected an artificial past to conceal an untidy childhood, and William Joyce, "Lord Haw Haw", an Irish-American born British fascist who joined Hitler's propaganda service to save England from himself. Outside its Irish context it becomes, perhaps unwittingly, a parable on the predicament of Irish high culture. The script argues for a continuity between the minor inventions of the social climber and the full-scale rejection of reality which leads to treason. It is a play about universals, expressed through the internal paradoxes of two fictionalized Irishmen, brought now to a non-Irish stage. The context, more than the author or the players, will determine which of the many possible levels of meaning will become fundamental. There are hints, though little more than that, that both Kilroy and Stephen Rea, who takes both main parts, are prepared for this to be taken as a play about Ireland.

A cast of eleven characters, covered by three actors, presents the problem in two discrete sections, both set during the Second World War. In the first half Rea takes the part of Brendan Bracken, supported by Kate O'Toole as Popsie ("an English Lady") and Richard Howard in various disguises. The play starts with some very didactic monologues. Then Rea/Bracken spends some time on the telephone to Sybil Colefax, Winston and others, and Popsie, dressed as a boy scout, sits on his knee and tries unsuccessfully to get him into bed. It is clear that Bracken is a self-obsessed

poseur, who has found it easy to penetrate the English establishment. Kilroy's conception of the English establishment includes a lot of funny voices and funny sex, but not much else. Inevitably, Bracken under stress allows himself to be found out, by a passing ARP warden, by Max Beaverbrook, and by a brilliantly portrayed Viscount Castlerosse, of whom more later. This section of the play is slightly too long.

William Joyce is somehow a more convincing contradiction. His loyalty to England is, of course, more paradoxical than Bracken's autobiographical fictions, but he is portrayed with more force, and his weaknesses are more visceral and immediate. His problem, which becomes for a time his justification, is that he is a powerful inventor of alternative Englands, including an England which would like to forge an alliance with Hitler. His fictional England is set in opposition to the real England, and this enough to get him hanged after the real England has won the war.

The theme of doubling, on which Kilroy insists, is barely enough to unify these two stories, and even the various fictionalized links between them do not bring them fully together. What unites them is Ireland's English problem: the endemic identity crisis of anglophone Irish culture, which yokes nationalism to an English literary tradition. This is what Bracken, the son of a republican, and Joyce, the Black and Tan informer, have painfully failed to escape. Burke is there to haunt Bracken: Joyce quotes Yeats as an English poet.

Viscount Castlerosse, an Irishman himself, delivers an admirable and very funny monologue on Bracken as a typical Irishman. And when Bracken, temporarily stunned in an air raid, raves in the voice of his Fenian father, Stephen Rea gives him a histrionic power which is lacking in the rest of the Bracken play but dominates the Joyce play. Whatever the author's or director's intention, this forced marriage of universal with culture-bound paradoxes is the strength of this remarkable play.

The Stefan Zweig Donation

On May 9, 1986 the British Library announced that it has been presented by the Trustees of the Stefan Zweig Estate with a magnificent gift of 180 musical and literary manuscripts. Seventy-five items are on display in the Crawford Room until June 29.

Most of the items were collected by Zweig himself and reflect his interest in the working papers of composers and writers. Zweig, who fled Hitler's Germany and lived for a time in Bath before going on to America and then Brazil where he committed suicide in 1942, regarded the collection as a work of art in itself, better even than his own writings. He felt that he was only its temporary custodian and hoped that it would be continued after his death and maintained as "a living organism". In response to this the British Library has set up a committee under the chairmanship of Ursula Vaughan-Williams to organize a series of concerts and recitals of musical works whose manuscripts are in the Zweig donation.

It is richest in Mozart material, including the composer's own thematic catalogue of his works, his string quintet in B flat (K 614) and the concerto for horn and orchestra (K 447). Beethoven is represented by, among other items, sketches for the third and fourth movements of the cello sonata in A major, and Schubert by his song "An die Musik". The collection also includes Beethoven's personal notebook for 1792-4 and two moving and vivid sketches of the composer on his death-bed by Josef Teltscher. The Wagner items are of particular interest for his early development and contain material from *Das Liebesverbot*, his setting of *Rule Britannia* and the full score to the revised ending of the overture to *Der Fliegende Holländer*. From the more modern period the library acquires its first musical autograph by Mahler (the twelfth of the *Das Knaben Wunderhorn* songs, later included in the second symphony); most of the full score of Schoenberg's *Five Orchestral Pieces*; Berg's full score of the *Violin Concerto*; and Stravinsky's sketchbook containing *Le Renard* and the sketch

score of Act II of Strauss's *Die schweigende Frau*.

The continental literary examples are also particularly strong with manuscripts by Goethe, Tolstoy (part of the draft of *The Kreutzer Sonata*), Flaubert's short story "Bibliomanie", Dostoevsky, Balzac, Baudelaire, Rimbaud, and Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* copied out for Cosima Wagner. The few English items in the collection are also of some interest. The final chorus from Handel's *Florinda* helps complete the manuscript of the opera, most of which is already in the British Library. Pope's poem "To the Right Honourable the Earl of Oxford" was previously known to the editors of the Twickenham edition only from the facsimile published in the *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1809. Similarly the manuscript of lines 87-150 of Keats's "I stood tiptoe upon a little hill" are listed by Skiller as missing, and were available to editors only in the collation published by M. B. Forman in the TLS in 1938. Shelley's "To . . . Lord Byron" and Wilde's poem "In the Golden Room" are also both in the donation. A full catalogue of this magnificent gift is in preparation.

H.R.W.

A Bibliography of Canadiana, covering material in the Metropolitan Toronto Library relating to the early history and development of Canada, has been a standard work of reference from the time of its publication in 1934. A supplement was published in 1959, bringing the total number of items to 6,268. Three further volumes are planned, increasing the coverage to 9,500 items. First of these, now issued, is the *Second Supplement, Volume Two*, edited by Sandra Alston and Karen Evans (839pp. Metropolitan Toronto Library Board. \$55, 0 88773 029 9). This covers items published between 1801 and 1849, and it will be followed by volumes covering the pre-1801 period and that from 1850 to Confederation in 1867. Computer techniques have been used to furnish the text and to compile seven indexes.

Deftly disinterred

Keith Brown

SHAKESPEARE and JOHN FLETCHER
The Two Noble Kinsmen
Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

This production inaugurates the Royal Shakespeare Company's third Stratford stage, designed by Michael Reardon and intended primarily for non-Shakespearean sixteenth and seventeenth-century drama. The RSC has been fortunate in its architect. In ground-plan the Swan auditorium – fitted into the U-shaped shell of the old Memorial Theatre, which was built out in 1926 – may be described as a square with the side away from the stage poked out into a semi-circle. Into this auditorium space, across almost the full depth of the square, projects a rather narrow thrust stage – only twenty feet wide, but well over thirty-five feet deep. Two tiers of light timber balconies surround the auditorium, the upper tier containing (as a musicians' gallery) across the rear of the stage: tall posts carried to the full height of the building support these railed balconies and spill them into compartments. With the auditorium floor only lightly raked, and the stage breast-high to the seated spectators who are pushed close against it, and with the whole interior entirely carpenter's work, the general effect thus created is of an elegantly skeletal replica in modern idiom of the Elizabethan open theatre.

However, literary scholars, tempted to hunt in the Swan productions for clues as to how "it must have been" in Shakespeare's own Globe, will have to tread warily. There is a great difference in size, for instance: if the new Swan catered for groundlings, its capacity would be nearly 800 (in fact it seats 450, none more than thirty feet from the stage). The Wooden O's capacity was three or four times that. On the other hand it is large enough, unlike Stratford's 150-seat Other Place, for the lighting, focused towards its low raised stage, to scatter sufficiently – aided by the auditorium's pale woodwork – to illuminate the audience, at levels quite comparable to that in the daylight Elizabethan theatres. It is reported that this is at present a little disconcerting for actors, unused to being made as aware of the shifting expressions on the faces round their feet as on those of their colleagues onstage: will they, with time, become inured to this return to Elizabethan conditions, or will it come gradually to influence the house acting-style? It will also be interesting to see whether the Swan's odd-shaped stage will be modified: it approximates the proportions of an Elizabethan open-theatre stage – but with the long axis rotated 90 degrees. As it is, it poses a challenge to which Barry Kyle rises splendidly in the present production; but one can see that this is a challenge of which future directors might take note.

An equally formidable challenge is also posed in this case by the play-text. Examined with an eye to stage production *The Two Noble Kinsmen* is daunting reading. Shakespeare appears only to have written (roughly speaking) the beginning, middle and end of the play, while Fletcher's fill-in material is discrepant in tone and episodic. The formal, hieratic quality of the play's first scene invites comparison with the Classical drama of which its echoes of *Antigone* remind us – yet even here, Hippolyta's appeal to Theseus is in a clogged, elliptical late Shakespearean style very difficult to deliver to an audience. In Act One, Scene Two, what seems to be occasional garbling in the transcription of the original manuscript makes the verse still harder to speak. In the main body of the play, Fletcher's blatant borrowings from major Shakespeare plays seem, on paper, embarrassingly thin material. The later part of the story turns upon the trial by combat to the death ordered by Theseus to settle the competition between the two virtually indistinguishable rival lovers, Palamon and Arcite; taken seriously, this is a morally obscene way of imposing a husband on Emilia – yet only the play itself seems to notice. Even taken just as literary horror, it flattens the characters the actors have to present. And the irrelevant Morris-dance episode in Act Three, cribbed

from Beaumont) seems an obvious device, like Theseus's harshness, for enlivening a dullish story.

What, then, will the RSC be able to do to mitigate the rigours of the coming evening, one asks, trooping dutifully in to watch the disinterment of this defunct drama? Get it over quickly, by slashing the text? Or play for extra-textual laughs as the Old Vic did in 1928, putting Palamon in a funny red wig?

Against such glum expectations, Barry Kyle achieves a distinct triumph. How is it done? Partly, through some masterly clarification. By dressing the characters in the Palamon-Arcite story in quasi-Japanese garb and through unpedantic borrowings from Japanese theatrical conventions, we are given an integrating context of associations in which the slightly formalized feel of much of the play can be fully brought out, yet also married with the vein of primitive ferocity in this part of the plot. Meanwhile the splendid simplified Japanese costumes – solid blocks of black, crimson, or white – also give scope for rich visual effects, reinforced at times (not always successfully) by use of the long symbolic streamers and ribbons of the Japanese theatre.

Palamon and Arcite are crisply distinguished. The former, in a menacing spray of saliva, really does often seem mad – which, after all, is what his cousin calls him – rather than merely "mad-for-love". By contrast, Arcite (played by the very impressive Hugh Quarshie) is a cooler intelligence trapped in a fight he has not sought. Unlike these *saturnal*, however, the play's humbler characters are only lightly touched by the Japanese brush: the Morris dancers are classic Elizabethan stage rustics, played – for once – without condescension. Imogen Stubbs's moving and delightful debut as the Gaoles's Daughter, already much praised, provides the highlight of the evening; although the extent to which she is standing on Fletcher's shoulders should not be underestimated: this role almost always charms.

At present, the Mourning Queens of Act One lack style; Theseus sounds at times too like the Demon King; and Guy Woolfenden's background music provokes one, or two in-advertent smiles. But time should amend this. What it will perhaps not amend, without some rethinking by the director, is the needless volume of shouting and hysteria that mars the later stages of the evening. Why should Pirithous (Robert Morgan), whose economically authoritative verse-speaking has been a continuous pleasure, then suddenly be forced to bellow the news of Arcite's death at us so loudly that many in the best seats in the house could not make out his words? Why should Amanda Harris, who has only just finished turning Emilia into a princess of disconcerting dignity and force, then be made to smash her own creation, against all psychological likelihood, by howling and wallowing? And all in an auditorium so fine-tuned that even a lowered voice on stage carries to the whole house.

At the Sign of the Swan: An Introduction to Shakespeare's contemporaries by Judith Cook (207pp. Harrap. £9.95, 0 245 5463 9) provides a general introduction to the lives and work of fifteen Jacobean playwrights, as well as discussing such topics as "Companies, Theatres and Players", "Bloody Revenge and Tragedy" and "The Place of Women". The book is illustrated by photographs of RSC productions and there is a foreword by Trevor Nunn. Other recently published books on the drama of the period include *Suicide and Despair in the Jacobean Drama* by Rowland Wymer (199pp. Harvester, £25, 0 7108 0667 1), which examines the role of suicide as a means of generating "ethical force and emotional effect" in tragedy; *Complication and the Emotional Effect* in tragedy, by Robert Nunn; *Hamlet, Macbeth, Lear, Othello, Antony and Cleopatra, Julius Caesar and The Duchess of Malfi*. Audience reaction is also discussed in *Engagement with Knave: Point of view in Richard III, The Jew of Malta, Volpone and The Revenger's Tragedy* (177pp. £22.50. Durdum: Duke University Press, 0 8223 0320 8), in which Robert Jones analyses the audience's point of view and describes how it is manipulated by the villains in the four plays discussed.

COMMENTARY



"Angelica and Medoro", by Guercino, from Denis Mahon's collection which can be seen in an exhibition of Drawings by Guercino (1591-1666) at the Ashmolean Museum until June 22. A catalogue to the exhibition Guercino Drawings from the Collections of Denis Mahon and the Ashmolean Museum, compiled by Denis Mahon and David Ekserdjian with the assistance of Helen Davies and sponsored by the Burlington Magazine, Hazlitt, Gooden and Fox and the Ashmolean Museum, is published by the Ashmolean Museum (52pp. £7.95 or £5 at the exhibition. 0 907 849 60 1).

A kindergarten monarch

John Pitcher

SHAKESPEARE
The Winter's Tale
Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

Shakespeare's Sicily is at once the most open and most princelocked of places. It is an island which draws from the rest of the world (a Russian-born queen, Bohemian prince and Greek oracle), and yet a prison-house as well, with gates and posterns ready to be shut, and a ruler claiming total authority, a prerogative without need of council. The island has no bears, and in the speeches of Leontes at least, all of Sicilian nature, far from being some great creating goddess, is trapped, tamed or shot at: there are nebs, bills, ponds, sluiceways, and cattle on the hoof, but the wild things are only nettles, and wasps' tails, stinging a jealous husband in his sheets. Sicily is like Hamlet's nutshell, the size of which depends on the prince's bad dreams alone. Can it be fortuitous that Leontes calls his son a kernel, a soft squash at the centre of his own hard nut?

At Stratford, over the years, John Barton and Trevor Nunn formulated these elements – male tyrannies overwhelming nature – in a series of white and Nordic winter scenes. This year the RSC has gone back to this premise – that even the hotlands of volcanic Sicily can be frozen – and *The Winter's Tale* begins with snowflakes, a polar bear rug (a gift from Polixenes?), mirrors and polished surfaces of ice, a tripod of fire, and a company chilled to the bone. A boy soprano sings, the flakes fall on nursery furniture, and (with the help of the programme notes) we are invited to see this Leontes as a Peter Pan, a boy king who has never grown up and away from the sentimentalized Christmasy innocence that Hermione interrupted. As Jeremy Irons plays him, Leontes is not a neurotic adult skaling on thin ice, terrified that at any moment his sexual fantasies will crack beneath the weight of guilt, but rather a child who is not fully responsible for his actions. He can be bullied by his adopted aunt Paulina (even before Mamillius's death); he catches himself longing to hug the new-born Perdita simply out of joy, and in the trial scene he ends up looking like a duncer, with an over-large crown preposterously tipped forward on his brow. One may quarrel with this interpretation (surely the tragedy depends on Leontes regressing, gilding himself, and deliberately surrendering his adulthood), but at least it is a clear line.

Not everything in this production has the same independence or clarity. Some of the scenes in Bohemia are particularly derivative: the rustic songs and games in Act Four are delivered by athletic young people as if they were in an episode from *Fame*, or in an inert bit from a Lloyd Webber musical. Even the normally splendid Joe Mella is drawn into an underpowered version of Autolycus, which begins a shade too close to Joel Grey's Emcee in *Cabaret*. As for the bear, well, it is a forty-foot swollen Sooty, the rug animated and given a big growl. In all, it is as if getting the play out of Fortness Sicily (or as he renders it, Kindergarten Sicily) leaves Terry Hands with too little to say, except hang on until we are back home (where we find the now geriatric Leontes in a wheelchair).

Problems of this kind are often attributed to the play's structure, or its genre, but this is not fair to Shakespeare. What is missing in Hands's Bohemia is any poetic continuity with his version of Sicily. True, by doubling Hermione and Perdita, the production makes one obvious link, and at small cost: Penny Downie is just right as the queen, although perhaps a few years too mature to play her adolescent daughter. Further, having established the boyhood falsetto as the signature for loss in Sicily, a few bars of this song, returned at crucial moments sixteen years later (say when Polixenes first sees Perdita), will certainly remind us of an old and still smarting wound. These are devices or resemblances which may direct the audience, but which can hardly by themselves signify enough of the return of spring amid the casualties of winter. When Perdita offers to strew flowers over Florizel, she insists that his body is living, a bank of love to lie and play on, rather than a corpse. Yet in Sicily there had been a real corpse, that of the boy Mamillius on whom no woman would ever lie, and it is this impossible conjunction of experience – cold flesh with warm; stone with living tissue; red blood in the winter's pale – which a production must attempt in some way to realize.

The conjunction is derived ultimately from the old Patacrach oxymoron for sexual intensity – icy fire – and had Hands dug deep enough into the text he would surely have seen it. Perhaps he did glimpse it (in the trial scene the couriers wear bright red sashes over their white suits), but chose not to make it the poetic staple of his production. Perhaps he would regard the trope as too literary, or too poetical, yet it is the staple of *The Winter's Tale*: Leontes is a Mediterranean prince who is hot, too hot, in winter, and who could sleep if only he could burn all his woman in fire. When a director does not explore these contradictions he risks losing contact with the poetry of the play.

Rituals of divine Reason

Peter Clarke

T. R. WRIGHT
The Religion of Humanity: The impact of Comtean Positivism on Victorian Britain
 306pp. Cambridge University Press. £27.50.
 0521 30671 X
IAN MACKILLOP
The British Ethical Societies
 204pp. Cambridge University Press. £25.
 0521 26672 6

To the eye of Leslie Stephen, historic Protestantism was simply rationalism running around with the shell still on its head. It was left to the nineteenth century, however, to hatch a brood of successively more secular sects which constituted at once a rejection of and a substitute for revealed Christianity. It is not just tempting, it is practically irresistible, to cast a satirical glance upon that handful of earnest frock-coated attenders at obscure Sunday gatherings which they could never satisfactorily agree among themselves to designate as either business meetings or religious worship (a cause, as will be seen, of subsequent legal difficulty). This was basically the issue in the great Comtist schism of 1878 when, so the joke went, the members had come to church in one cab and left in two. A Positivist, one might conclude, was a man as undismayed by the shell on his head as by the egg on his face.

"The impact of Comtean Positivism on Victorian Britain" is the theme of T. R. Wright's excellent book, *The Religion of Humanity*, which combines wide reading and thorough research with a restraint in exposition which was exactly what was needed. He takes the Positivists seriously, though we are allowed to smile at their solemnity; and he traces a wide influence while showing himself aware of the danger of exaggerating it. For example, he shows an unexpectedly large number of explicit references to the Religion of Humanity in novelists such as George Eliot,

Hardy and Gissing, without pouncing on every last allusion to "humanity" in late-Victorian fiction, drama or poetry as necessarily strengthening his case. His conclusion is that "the central artistic medium for the discussion and dissemination of the Religion of Humanity was undoubtedly the novel".

Auguste Comte himself was not an appealing man, except in the narrow sense that he expected his friends to give him money and complained bitterly when their contributions were insufficient. John Stuart Mill had collected a subsidy for him in 1844 but when he was unable to renew the support was sent a long letter setting out Comte's theory of patronage with special reference to himself. It is little wonder that Mill and other English sympathizers were unwilling to assume the full burden of discipleship, and not only for financial reasons. "I can recognize as my true disciples", Comte proclaimed, "only those who, renouncing the project of founding a synthesis of their own, regard that which I have constructed as essentially sufficient and radically preferable to any other. Their duty is to propagate and apply it, without aiming at criticizing or even improving it."

As a sociologist, Comte identified the Law of Three Stages – theological, metaphysical and scientific – which pointed to the social function that religion had served before its intellectual obsolescence had been sealed by the rise of positive science. What he proposed, therefore, in the name of Positivism, was to replace the exploded dogma of revealed Christianity with a Religion of Humanity that would meet men's spiritual needs in a thoroughly up-to-date way. As a prophet, Comte drew upon his relationship, lasting only twelve months before her death in 1846, with Clotilde de Vaux – "l'ange qui ne cessera jamais d'avoir trente ans", whom he contrasted with his wife, "le démon qui vient de commencer sa cinquante-unième année". Of such stuff are dreams made on, but not, it seems, great world religions.

Comte's point was that we could now understand the subjective utility of religion: "The only essential difference between subjectivity in its later and its primitive stages is this. In its later shape we must be fully conscious of it, and openly avow it, no one ever confusing it with objectivity." Positivists, in short, had to be conscious that their own religion was a fiction designed to gratify their own sense of emotional inadequacy. Christians prayed with their eyes shut, but Comtists entered the temple of Humanity with their eyes open. Positivism thus lacked mystery. The mumbo-jumbo of Christianity had a patina of antiquity which made it venerable. The mumbo-jumbo of Positivism was freshly contrived in a style that made it risible.

Mill insisted on discriminating between what he found helpful and what ridiculous in Comte, arguing that otherwise "either the absurdities will weigh down the merits or the merits float the absurdities". He remained a candid friend, somewhat distrusted accordingly by the fervent disciples. Of these, Richard Congreve, sometime Fellow of Wadham College, Oxford, was the most prominent. It was Congreve who became minister of the Church of Humanity in Chapel Street, Bloomsbury: the younger Wadham man whose tutor he had been – Frederick Harrison, J. H. Bridges, E. S. Beesly – who withdrew to Newton Hall, off Fetter Lane, Fleet Street. Harrison, as the leader of the secular wing, remained boilingly contemptuous of the clerical atmosphere of Chapel Street – "how injurious to the spread of Positivist philosophy and sociology are the silly so-called 'services' in the dingy hole so-called 'Church of Humanity'".

It has long been recognized that Harrison and Beesly found in Positivism a firm basis for their social and political radicalism, especially in their role as propagandists for trade unionism in the 1860s. Public awareness of the Positivists was out of all proportion to their numbers, as Beesly well knew: "When I think that there are some half dozen of us that make all this stir, I must say that we manage wonderfully well." In Ruskin's more jaundiced view, they were "one of the most microscopic 'isms' which have ever become particles of coagulation for the wandering imaginations of the Sons of Men". Harrison was, on the one hand, buoyed up by the faith that was in him, yet, on the other, acutely embarrassed by its peculiarity. In the first mood he could write of "how I came by degrees to solve the main problems of Thought". In the second, he would complain: "If one of us were to make remarks about the horses for the next 'Derby', there would be a hullabaloo about Clotilde de Vaux, Priestcraft, monkeys and protoplasm".

It is one of the strengths of Wright's account that it is not merely institutional in focus but brings out the pervasive influence of Positivism among persons who were not, as it were, card-carrying members. John Morley, for example, was very much the Positivist fellow-traveller – "one of the most useful men to our cause", as Congreve put it, "more useful to us in fact than if he were more fully with us". Morley was encouraged to keep his distance when he found reviews of his books throwing "Clotilde de Vaux and all the rest... systematically into my very innocent face". Henry Sidgwick, too, felt an intellectual attraction towards Comte, countered by an emotional distaste. "I cannot swallow his Religion of Humanity", he admitted, "and yet his arguments as to the necessity of Religion of some sort have great weight with me".

In effect, the more correct Comte was proved to be about a deep-felt need for religion, the less likely it was that his own construct would catch on. To a humble adherent like Philip Thomas, who had progressively shed his shell via Nonconformity, Unitarianism and Ethicism, the Comtist revelation was the ultimate synthesis: a view he reiterated pointedly to the Ethicists, whom other Positivists like Beesly saw as potential converts. "These Ethicists are simply Positivists minus the definite dogma and formulae of Comte", Harrison noted. When his wife, visiting the West London Ethical Society, asked, "Is it not rather vague?", she was told, "Ah! but we like it."

This sort of vagueness proved too much for Mr Justice Dillon in 1980 when the South Place Ethical Society was found liable for damages.

heard in the High Court. The objects of the Society, he ruled, were not "religious", a term which "while giving the flavour of what is in mind, is not in my view used in its correct sense". As Ian MacKillop's account in *The British Ethical Societies* shows, this difficulty had been long in the making. In its origins the late eighteenth century, South Place had been called Philadelphian and Universalist before acquiring a broadly Unitarian character under its formidable minister, William Johnson Fox, later a radical MP. Yet Fox's chapel was in turn disowned by the Unitarian Association after a scandalous confrontation between his wife and his beautiful young ward – presumably indicating rather too tritarily a propensity for official taste. By 1849, in his last days at South Place, Fox was lecturing on "The Religion of Humanity". His successor, Moncreaf Conway, declined to wear the minister's black gown and led the way in abandoning petitionary prayer. Thus was the ground prepared for the third major figure in the history of South Place: Stanton Coit, who brought with him from America the notion – indeed, the peremptory demand – that it should adopt the name Ethical Society.

South Place, incurably agnostic, is rightly given pride of place in MacKillop's study. But he also pays close attention to the resolutely secular London Ethical Society, that nest of Idealist philosophers, and brings out the leading part taken by J. H. Muirhead and Bernard Bosanquet in late nineteenth-century social investigation and political argument. Finally, the story is told of the West London Ethical Society, to which Coit transferred his efforts in the early 1890s after a short and stormy tenure at South Place. Here it was that Coit fulfilled his ultimate vision of establishing an Ethical Church. The Sunday meeting, he argued, was virtually a church service and ought to be so designated. In order to attract doubting Christians and other converts. He could persuade the other Ethical Societies only to go so far as renaming their songbook *Ethical Hymns*, but at the West London Ethical Church Coit's sacerdotal leanings were given full rein – canticles, anthems and hymns, led by the choir, before the minister, in gown and cassock, preached from a pulpit, surrounded by stained-glass windows.

"The ritual of the Ethical Church", Ian MacKillop comments, "has inspired transports of superciliousness in its critics." He offers some extenuation against the charge of inauthenticity but does not disguise the fact that Ethical congregations, like their Comtist counterparts, succumbed to the characteristic twentieth-century temptation to vote with their feet. In 1910 Philip Thomas had predicted that "before the end of the present century the world will come to the conclusion that the greatest and most enduring religious work done in England in the nineteenth century was the establishment of Positivism and the founding of this first Church of Humanity by Richard Congreve". It was not to be. Chapel Street had already declined to a congregation of half a dozen; the lease of Newton Hall fell in ruin in hard times merely staved off the demise. For the Ethicists, likewise, the First World War brought plummeting attendances. The final irony is that the Ethical Church was killed by the decline in church-going and that the waning in religious observance made an early victim of the Religion of Humanity.

Unsecular Man: The Persistence of Religion by Andrew M. Greeley, first published in 1974 and reviewed in the TLS of October 19, 1977, has recently been reissued with a new introduction by the author (280pp. New York: Schocken; distributed in the UK by Clio Distribution Services. Paperback, £7.95. 0 8052 0794 5). Greeley mentions developments in the decade and a half since the book was written – the takeover of Iran, by the Ayatollahs, the self-massacre of the Jonestown sect, the fundamentalist revival in the United States – which would seem to bear out his rejection of the "secularization" of the modern world. He comments: "The fundamental argument of this book has of course not changed. People will need religion as long as they need meaning. Whatever may be their ultimate explanation for the meaning of life, that will be their religion." This book is a study of the persistence of religion in the modern world, and also with a "bare reality", and also with a "bare reality", and also with a "bare reality".

The philosopher on Dover Beach

Roger Scruton

In *The Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant struck a blow against the traditional arguments of theology as to leave that science in a condition of self-doubt from which it has never recovered. Nevertheless religion survived; it was Kant's declared hope, indeed, that, by destroying the claims of Reason, he had made room for those of Faith. It may not be possible to deduce the existence of a necessary being from the premise of the world's contingency; yet a true understanding of the world and of our place as free beings within it opens the way, he thought, to a religious experience that is all the more secure through being independent of theology. Through the moral law, and the act of obedience which it compels from us, we are presented with so vivid an intimation of transcendence, as to want nothing that is needed for the worship of God.

In *The Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant went further, arguing that practical reason, which is the foundation of morality, could provide a substitute for theology, a new science of the divine which would uphold the very system of beliefs that traditional theology had sought vainly to justify. We need not follow Kant into these difficult regions, in order to feel some sympathy for the idea which originally inspired him: the idea that morality, far from depending on the belief in God, provides a unique and vivid support for it. So persuaded was Kant, however, by the view that morality is the ground rather than the consequent of religion, that he allowed himself to describe the moral law in terms borrowed directly from liturgical tradition. The worship due to God became a kind of "reverence" for the moral law. The faith which transcends belief became the certainty of practical reason, which surpasses understanding. The object of esteem was not the Supreme Being, but the supreme attribute of Reason. The moral order was the "realm of grace", the actual community of rational beings the "mystical body" in the world of nature, and the Kingdom of God to which mortals aspire became the Kingdom of Ends which they make real through their self-legislation.

Thus, in providing a moral basis for religious doctrine, Kant presented a thoroughly "theologized" morality, one which preserved, in disguised form, the basic conceptions of Christian doctrine. It is not surprising, therefore, if Nietzsche, in his persona as Antichrist, would have sought to undo the work of this "metaphysical spider". The web of sophistication which Kant spun around the Christian religion was torn to shreds. Nietzsche was one of the officious housemaids who savaged it; the other was Marx. Both wished to destroy the authority of Christian doctrine by providing a naturalistic explanation – a "genealogy" – of our belief in it. For Nietzsche, Christianity, and the Kantian morality which now sits bareheaded upon the grave thereof, are illusions of the resentful, distorting mirrors in which the strong are crumpled and the cripples stand tall. For Marx, religion was the controlling ideology of the powerful, which translates the artifice of power into a natural order and a gift of God. For both of them, the inherited religion of the West is not just an untruth, but a sophisticated lie.

The Nietzschean and Marxian explanations of Christian belief are incompatible. It is therefore somewhat surprising that the two philosophies are not more fervently at loggerheads. But Marxists do not devote pages to the refutation of the Nietzschean theory of *ressentiment*, and Nietzschean critics pay no retort to the Marxian theories of ideology and class. A Marxist, wishing to increase the power of the powerless, seeks to destroy religion; if a Nietzschean, however, it is because he seeks to take away from the powerless the little power that they have slowly acquired. Nevertheless, both Marxists and Nietzscheans rest secure in the belief that either of their explanations will undermine the credibility of the thing examined. This "undermining of belief" is the essence of the appeal of both philosophies – the belief that the world is being rid of faith, and that the world is coming face to face with a "bare reality", and also with a "bare reality", and also with a "bare reality".

sioned centre of an ungoverned world.

From that disenchanted vision of the cosmos flow two rival moralities – the aesthetic one of self-affirmation, and the political one of Utopian justice. Perhaps nothing is more remarkable, in these moralities of unbelief, than the ease with which they may be conjoined in a single soul – the ease with which a person may believe that the cause of self-affirmation and the cause of Utopia are one and the same, and that whatever is right according to the one standard will also be right according to the other. Such is the state of mind conveyed in his later writings by Sartre, for whom the absolute lawlessness and unanswerability of the existentialist anti-hero were identical with the selfless pursuit of a revolutionary justice. The mental labour whereby Sartre accomplished this synthesis was perhaps not so great as that involved in writing, let alone reading, the *Critique de la raison dialectique*. A pattern of thought that is reiterated by every articulate terrorist cannot derive from the opaque justification which Sartre provided for it. Sartre's *Critique* should perhaps be seen as an attempt at theology: a presentation of arcane reasons for an independently existing emotional

which the traditional conceptions of Christian theology were explained in terms of a brilliant theory of psychological projection. Religion in general, Feuerbach argued, and Christianity in particular, can be seen as elaborate devices whereby man frees himself from the arduous task of self-improvement, by personifying his virtues and his communal life, and setting them up outside himself, in a transcendental realm, all possibility of access to which is barred to him. The evil of religion consists precisely in its ability to sever man from his possibilities, to alienate him from his fulfillment in "species being", and to maintain him in a condition of slavery and subjection, the victim of his transcendental illusions.

The success of Feuerbach's book – which influenced, in language, thought and outlook, the entire history of German nineteenth-century social thinking – is again to be seen, not in the fact that it explained the belief in God without also evincing it, but in the fact that the explanation served to focus a profound hostility to religion, and to represent faith as the root cause of the very evil for which it had always been offered as a remedy – the evil of guilt, or "original sin". At the same time, the



Detail from one of Henri Stierlin's photographs in his *A Cultural History of the Arabs* (25pp. £7.95. 0 906033 63 3), showing ceramic tile decoration in the Ben Youssef Madrasa, Marrakesh.

tendency. Whether in its theological or in its spontaneous form, however, this tendency shows the extraordinary ease with which disenchantment and the love of self can be combined into a revolutionary purpose. The point is perhaps familiar from the writings of Turgenev and Conrad. Nevertheless, it is worth returning to: the gap between nihilism and revolutionary commitment remains as narrow today as it was a century ago, and the sparks which fly across it are as inflammatory now as then.

Judged as "genealogy", the Nietzschean and Marxian theories of Christian belief are far from satisfactory. Nietzsche's theory is incompatible with the manifest truth that Christianity has provided such psychological space for the strong and the dominant as to allow them to establish empires throughout the world. Marx's theory of religion – like his theory of so much else – is almost entirely trivial, amounting to little more than the indisputable claim that religion survives, because it is not dysfunctional.

I doubt that any serious believer would be very much disturbed by the general possibility of a naturalistic explanation of religion. If the claims of faith are true, then it follows that no scientific explanation of our belief could involve a commitment to God's existence, since God is transcendental. That religious belief is to be explained naturalistically is precisely what a true believer must expect. Debunking explanations of religion can therefore hardly give us any new reason for rejecting it – any reason that was not already contained in Kant's attack on natural theology. Their interest lies rather in their moral character.

Some insight into this character can be obtained from the archetype of naturalistic explanations of religion, then this one is surely

the most intuitively plausible: that religion is the voice of the species, which becomes articulate in us, in order that we should more willingly obey it. The need for individual salvation is also the need to be reconciled with the community; the need to overcome the reluctance to sacrifice; the need to be accepted back into the realm of love – love of mate, family, ancestors and progeny, love in particular of what has yet to be. (If you ask yourself why marriage is a sacrament and a vow before God, then you will instantly see the plausibility of such an explanation, as well as the real contribution made by religion to the happiness of man.)

If you point to the actual unhappiness of modern man under the rule of secular doctrine; if you mention the Holocaust, the Gulag and the ever-expanding system of enslavement which has been built from the new morality of Marx and Lenin; if you say that here, for everyone to see, is the proof of original sin, and the evidence that man is after all not sufficient for his own redemption, failing most dismally in emancipating himself precisely when he seeks to free himself from God; if you say such things, a thousand excuses are offered, and a thousand accusations made against the old transcendental faith. And it is indeed right to insist that all human institutions – religion included – are contaminated by man's vanity and imperfection. Nevertheless, rather than dismiss the accusations that are made against the Marxian and the Nietzschean religions, we should look more closely, I believe, at what is peculiar about the cruelties that have been perpetrated in the name of them – apart from the obvious fact of their astonishing scale.

It seems to me that the morally decisive feature of the death camp – and of the totalitarian system which engenders it – is its impersonal, cynical and scientific approach to the victims. Systematic torture and murder become a bureaucratic task, for which no one is liable, and for which no one is particularly to blame. Hannah Arendt wrote, in this connection, of a "banalization" of evil. It would be more appropriate to speak of a "depersonalization", a severance of evil from the network of personal responsibility. The totalitarian system, and the extermination camp, which is its most sublime expression, are without the marks of individual care. In such a system, human life is driven underground, and the precious ideas of freedom and responsibility – ideas without which our picture of man as a moral subject disintegrates entirely – have no public recognition, and no place in the administrative process. If it is so easy to destroy people in such a system, it is because human life enters the public world already severed from its value.

I do not offer to prove, what nevertheless has been vividly impressed on me by my own study and experience, that this impersonal (and therefore ungovernable) evil is the true legacy of the naturalistic view of man. Those very philosophies which enjoin us to place man upon the throne from which God was taken away for burial, have been most influential in creating the new image of man as an accident of nature, to whom nothing is either forbidden or permitted by any power beyond himself. God is an illusion; so too is the divine spark in man. Human freedom is nothing but an appearance on the face of nature; beneath it rides the same implacable causality, the same sovereign indifference, which prepares death equally and unconcernedly for all of us, and which tells us that beyond death there is nothing. This vision – whose moral temper was captured so perfectly by Leopardi – is present, in some form or other, in almost all truly modern literature and art. It rises to brief and threatening glory in the revolutionary consciousness of Lenin. But, even though it may clothe itself in Utopian ambitions, the very adoption of a "morality of goals" serves further to fuel its inner nihilism. The machine which is established for the efficient production of Utopia has total licence to kill. Nothing is sacred, and its killings are not murders (for which human individuals alone are liable) but "liquidations". Such is the liturgical language of the religion of Antichrist, the religion which puts man in God's place, and yet which sees in man only the mortal organism, the slowly evaporating goblet of flesh.

If it is wrong, however, to describe the disenchanted faith of the Marxists and the Nietzscheans as religions. Rather they are apostasies; for they direct towards what is merely

contingent the absolute submission which is due to God. They also recall only one half – and the less vital half – of religious thinking. They preserve, in doctrinal form, the quest for man's redemption, while scorning the sacred as a sign of man's incompetence. From this, I believe, stems the profoundly destructive character of these secular superstitions.

The naturalistic explanations which threaten our sense of the sacred, threaten also the impulse of piety, upon which community and morality are founded. This is what Matthew Arnold foresaw on that "darkling plain": the loss of piety, the loss of respect for what is holy and untouchable; and in place of them a presumptuous ignorance, fortified by science. We should ask ourselves, therefore, whether we really are constrained, by our scientific realism, to dismiss the sacred from our view of things. Perhaps we might yet be able to find in our lives some intimation of a transcendence that we cannot explain nor describe, but to which we must address ourselves through symbols.

Kant argued that, while there is no place for the free being in the world described by science, our own self-awareness, without which no description of the world makes sense to us, forces upon us the idea that we are free. We live with two seemingly incompatible views of ourselves, and neither can be rejected without losing all title to objective knowledge. To see the world as scientifically explicable is to understand the object of knowledge; to see ourselves as free is to understand the subject. Subject and object exist in mutual interdependence, and each is nothing without the other.

Kant's answer to the problem of freedom was not so much a solution as a suspension of the question. The mystery, he argued, could never be comprehended. All we can do by way of reconciling the perspective of freedom with the perspective of science is to suggest that they open on to a single reality. That which, to scientific explanation, appears lawlike and

caused, to the moral life seems free; and neither appearance is delusory. The perspective of freedom asks questions that are never asked by science. The "Why?" of the free being seeks meanings, not causes. And from this search for meanings all value is derived. Freedom is the mysterious lining of the human organism, the subjective reality which gives sense and direction to our lives. Yet the free being is incarnate, and to see the human life as a vehicle for freedom – to see a face where the scientist sees flesh and blood and bone – is to recognize that this, at least, is sacred, that this small piece of earthly matter is not to be treated as a means to our purposes, but as an end in itself.

Kant's theory of freedom shows us how we might understand the sacred and the miraculous. Our understanding of the miraculous is like our understanding of the person. When we see another's smile we see human flesh moving in obedience to impulses in the nerves. No law of nature is suspended in this process: we smile not in spite of, but because of, nature. Nevertheless, we understand a smile in quite another way: not as flesh, but as spirit, freely revealed. A smile is always more than flesh for us, even if it is only flesh.

A miraculous event is one which wears, for us, a personal expression. We may not notice this expression, just as someone may stare at a portrait, see all the lines and colours which compose it, and fail to see the face. Similarly, a sacred place is one in which personality and freedom shine forth from what is contingent, dependent and commonplace – from a piece of stone, a tree, or a patch of water. Here we approach a thought that Kant expressed rather differently, in *The Critique of Judgment*. There is an attitude that we direct to the human person, and which leads us to see, in the human form, a perspective on the world that reaches from a point outside it. We may direct this very attitude, on occasion, to the whole of nature, and in particular to those places, things, events and artefacts where freedom has been real. The experience of the sacred is the sudden

encounter with freedom; it is the recognition of personality and purposefulness in that which contains no human will. In a place of martyrdom, where the utmost personal freedom has been exercised in a final renunciation, the sense of the sacred is distilled, becoming the common property of all who have it in themselves to worship there.

Religion is inseparable, in the end, from our sense of holiness – from our recognition that the meaning that we find in the human person exists also, in heightened and more awesome form, outside us, in places, times and artefacts: in a shrine, a gathering, a place of pilgrimage or prayer. Nothing in the scientific view of things forbids the experience of the sacred: science tells us only that this experience has a natural cause. Those who seek for meanings are indifferent to causes, and those who communicate with God through prayer should be no more cut off from him by the knowledge that the world does not contain him, than they are cut off from those they love by the knowledge that words, smiles and gestures are nothing but movements of flesh.

It is difficult, however, to retain the sense of the sacred without the collective ritual which compels us to listen to the voice of the species. For the modern intellectual, who stands outside the crowd, the memory of enchantment may be awakened more easily by art than by prayer. Yet art, properly understood, is a kind of prayer: it is an attempt to call the timeless

and the transcendental to the scene of some human incident. Hence Rilke's vision of the new, almost private religion through which the reign of the machine may be negated.

But being is still enchanted for us; in a hundred places it remains a source, a play of pure Forces, which touches no one who does not hand and wonder.

Words still go softly out towards the unspeakable. And music, always new, from palpitating stones Builds in useless space its godly home.

As Rilke showed in his life and poetry, and Eliot in his, the restoration of the sacred is no easy task. The point of intersection of the timeless with time may not be an occupation for the saint; but for those who are not in some measure saintly, it demands the willing co-operation of a whole community. And without the sacred, man lives in a dehumanized world: a world where all is permitted, and where nothing has absolute value. That, I believe, is the principal lesson of modern history, and if we tremble before it, it is because it contains a judgment on us. The hubris which leads us to believe that science has the answer to all our questions, that we are nothing but dying animals and that the meaning of life is merely self-affirmation, or at best the pursuit of some collective, all-embracing and all too human goal – this reckless suspension contains already the punishment of those who succumb to it.

The weight of testimony

R. K. Angress

MARTIN GILBERT
The Holocaust: The Jewish tragedy
959pp. Collins. £17.50.
0002163055

Martin Gilbert's *The Holocaust* is not primarily concerned with how Jews lived under the Nazis or with conditions in the concentration camps. Instead it focuses on how Jews died, on the exact circumstances of their extermination; it seeks to raise the dead from their anonymity and to give back to them their autonomy as well as the dignity of recognition.

Gilbert's method is simple: he tells the facts about genocide in chronological order, with a minimum of critical comment or no analysis at all, and then fleshes out these facts by paragraphs or lengthy quotations from eyewitness reports or contemporary commentary. That is, he sketches in the outlines of what the Nazis undertook to do, and then lets "living voices" tell us how genocide was perceived and witnessed by Jews and bystanders. He uses published material, as well as diaries, court testimony (such as that from the Eichmann trial), archival material (especially from Israel's Yad Vashem), in short, any kind of recollection he could find.

His approach is thus largely anecdotal, and the effect is cumulative. This is the Holocaust seen from the point of view of its victims, not a discussion of Nazi policies. It makes no attempt to introduce a broader perspective than the suffering of these victims, and it achieves its extraordinary effect through that very limitation. I suppose it is possible to fault the book for precisely what makes it riveting. It offers no interpretation of the events, presents no new research or theory of what brought about the worst outbreak of anti-Semitism in history, and even in its quotations it gives us largely what is readily available. But through its relentless concentration on what it meant to be Jewish at a certain time in a certain place, on how it felt to be inescapably trapped, not only as a single, dispensable person but with one's children and the entire community to which one belonged, Gilbert has created a volume that is in the end notably different from other Holocaust histories and literature.

What emerges from these group portraits of the doomed, Gilbert conveys the mass aspect of the Holocaust while at the same time salvaging, as far as possible, the individuality of the victims. The book thus satisfies not only our curiosity as to what happened, but also our sense of the dead. To quote

whatever can be quoted, to recall whatever can be recalled about their last months, weeks, hours, is a way of making historiography work as a memorial service for the dead. Sometimes all we learn is that a certain person was among the victims of a certain town. The person in question may or may not be mentioned a second time, but in either case the name adds nothing to the episode that is being told. At first I merely registered the irrelevancy as a flaw in the writing. But these "loose ends" occur too frequently. It rather seems that this generous naming of names is part of the author's effort to restore the identities of victims who, stripped of their clothes and numbered by tattoo, had been buried in mass graves.

One drawback of the anecdotal approach lies in the focus on instances of brutality and sadistic enjoyment on the part of the executioners. For while such outbreaks of hatred are the stuff of which the old pogroms were made, to emphasize them tends to blur the fact that the Holocaust could have been carried out without a single sadistic impulse. That was the novel, the truly chilling aspect of the Nazis' "war against the Jews". Gilbert's approach stresses individual acts of cruelty as if these were a necessary ingredient of the programme of extermination. I do not think they were. Enthusiasm for killing Jews was surely necessary for the success of the Final Solution, and probably not always available. A willingness to carry out orders, even a reluctant willingness, was just as effective.

One of Gilbert's recurrent themes is that there were many individual acts of resistance and defiance, most of which, however, went unrecorded, because those who engaged in them were instantly killed, and witnesses did not always survive to tell the tale. Moreover, personal acts of rebellion were usually the loved by mass reprisals; so that there were good reasons for refraining from them. The good reason for refraining from them, the issue at stake here is that for the past few years Jews the world over have been haunted by the idea that their people allowed themselves to be slaughtered and went to their deaths without putting up a fight. Gilbert is quite aware of this debate; and he does not treat successfully the folly of thinking of victims in terms of a failure of courage. His strength was quite simply overwhelming. He reacted to the onslaught in various ways, ranging from the butcher who killed an SS man with his bare teeth by biting through his throat, to the rabbi who told his congregation that their deaths with dignity and without pain. Through the sheer weight of accumulated testimony, we come to understand that the Jews were rounded up and killed like animals, they still died as human beings.

The worshippers' God and the philosophers' God

Lazek Kolakowski

Let us consider one of the most important, albeit infrequently mentioned, events in the history of European culture: the merging of the God of the Bible with the Neoplatonist's Absolute or One. Moses and Plotinus brought together? Abraham and Parmenides talking about – or conversing with – the same Being? This might seem utterly unimaginable if we were to locate ourselves in the heaven of pure concepts and disregard for a moment the actual historical process; and yet this is precisely what happened.

The word "event" is not quite proper, of course. For it has been a long series of cultural changes that has never come to, and probably never will end with, a satisfactory completion. The very nature of language resists this coincidence of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, God the Father of Jesus and the Father of all of us, with the impersonal ultimate entity that the disciples of Academia speculated upon for centuries. Above all, it is arguable that the human spiritual energies which governed the search for the Ultimate, on the one hand, and the divine legislator and protector, on the other, were not only different but incongruous and independent from each other.

From the second century AD onwards the spiritual story, both the Old and the New Testament, was gradually converted into an impossible metaphysical edifice, and the simple, easily intelligible speech of the prophets and of Jesus translated into the austere abstract idiom of Greek philosophers. This conversion was probably an essential precondition of Christianity's success in invading the spiritual world of the educated classes of the Roman Empire, a way in which none of its competitors among the religious movements then in existence proved capable of doing. To say this is to pay a (somewhat dubious) homage to philosophy. It seems that important spiritual mutations involve the metamorphosis of educated layers of society, and are not successful unless they have a philosophical background.

Apart from St John's Gospel, the doctrinal elaboration of the Christian message can be traced, to be sure, in dogmatic symbols, especially those related to the Trinity and Christology, established by the first ecumenical councils – the Nicene, Constantinopolitan and others – but above all in theological and philosophical works of the early Fathers and medieval scholastics. Indeed in the very emergence of "Christian philosophy": a prodigy which would have been probably no less an abomination to the great reformers of the sixteenth century. The history of philosophy in the Christian world is thus a history of the struggle to employ human reason and human logic in trying to fathom the divine mystery, to account to a godless hubris; we ought to be reminded, in humility, with the simple language of Scripture and not exercise our curiosity as a vain philosophizing which is pagan by definition. Philosophers replied that our reason is God's gift and, limited though it may be, it can – if modest and properly enlightened by faith, according to some, or even without this restriction, according to others – contribute greatly to our understanding of the mysterious divine governance of the universe.

Philosophers were in a better position in so far as various metaphysical expressions, not to be found in Scripture, had already been assimilated in the Church's dogmatic symbols. The language of "human inventions" and by the parlance of a Platonic or Alexandrian abstraction was strongly rooted in the tradition. After all, if God had wanted to give us the knowledge about himself in terms of substance and accidents, existence and essence, and so on, he would have done so, and better than we can ever do. But he did not. What he might be bringing us, apart from stirring our metaphysical and spiritual self-satisfaction, to correct our Lord and to depict him in terms that we are able to do with the way he revealed himself through the mouth of his prophets and apostles.

Our culpable curiosity is incurable. We always wish to know more than we are allowed to or that is safe for us; do we, how- ever, really know more about God when we

construct the abstract notion of the Absolute and infer from this notion its (or his) logically inescapable properties?

God is sometimes angry and revengeful, sometimes merciful and gentle; he is hurt by our iniquities and he deplores the unfaithfulness of his people; occasionally he regrets his past decisions; he wants us to fear and to love him; he makes us pious and kind, but he can also harden our hearts; he punishes children for their parents' wrongdoings, and his patience is by no means inexhaustible: every reader of the Bible knows that. The Absolute, on the other hand, is perfectly immutable, perfectly simple, timeless, self-contained, self-sufficient, impassible; no relationships with anything else but itself (himself) can alter its (his) imperturbable unity, and in this sense those relationships cannot be real to it (him).

Theologians used to explain this linguistic incongruity: God, in his revealed word, employs a language which is adjusted to human mental capacities, he presents himself to us as if he were a powerful king, in many ways similar to us – time-bound, affected by emotions, deliberating over the best course he should take in ruling his subjects, caring about them, castigating them but needing them as well, not unlike the way in which human creatures need children. This explanation seems to imply, however, that while the language of the revelation really is within the limits of our mind, the philosophers' pretentious slang is not: it is nothing but an attempt to express something that is fundamentally inexpressible, to invent words which may give us a spuriously satisfying sense of dominating the Infinite intellectually, but which are in fact meaningless in terms of our experience. Even if they are logically coherent, they are as empty as a deductive system of which the basic terms are in no way related to our intellectual intuition: they can be manipulated but are not understood.

That God is ineffable is, of course, dogmatically stated; but this truth served theologians mainly as a means whereby they could protect themselves from possible logical criticism, rather than as an encouragement to impose restraint on their speculation.

The scholastics were indeed troubled for centuries by the intractable problems which the idea of the Absolute, after it converged with the image of the biblical God, had fatefully generated. The Absolute is by definition perfectly simple: no parts, no separable aspects, no differentiation can really subsist in it; nothing can affect it in any way. Consequently, it is impossible for it to know anything but itself; in other words, it is logically bound to be what it knows. How then can it know particular finite creatures? Or contingent events? Or evil? Does it become itself finite, contingent, evil? Whichever way we turn, it goes wrong: either it does not know anything but itself, and then to call it omniscient makes no sense; or it does, and then its simplicity is destroyed. Therefore we take refuge in saying that God is inscrutable. (All right, he is; so why do we not want to draw conclusions from this obvious truth?) Thomists, Scotists, nominalists were to squabble endlessly over these issues.

Omnipotence is another attribute of the Absolute. We can imagine a divine Being who is immeasurably more powerful than we: he can move mountains, order the Sun to halt, crush the Earth and shape the human race from the dust. But what is it to be literally, unrestrictedly Almighty? Can God alter the past? Can he order that two and two equal seventeen rather than four? Can he know all the digits in the decimal expansion of pi? Can he convert a sin into a virtue? Can he forgive the Devil?

The Absolute is timeless, and not everlasting. Again, we can think of an everlasting being which can infallibly predict the future and keeps in memory everything that has ever happened. A being which is timeless and thus lives without making the distinction between the anticipated future and the remembered past, a being which embraces the whole of time in the point-like simultaneity of its eternal present, can be verbally described, yet not touched by our normal intuition (if it is experienced in mystical union, it is certainly beyond the reach of most mortals).

And so it goes on. Whichever attribute of the Absolute we try to identify – even the expres-

sion "an attribute of the Absolute" is a concession to the clumsiness of human language, as it suggests separable qualities in the ineffable unity – we stumble on antinomies, which we can usually patch up, to be sure, but can never solve. If we try to be consistent when talking about the Absolute, we soon realize that – in keeping with our normal way of thinking – it cannot be a person, cannot be God who loves us, helps us, rewards or punishes. How can Christian theology have it both ways, without simply escaping from what its critics call contradiction into what theologians call a mystery?

And yet the matter is less simple than the arguments just cited might suggest. It is not theologians who invented the eternally elusive concept of the Absolute. This concept emerged as a result of what may be called an intellectual compulsion of minds – and there is never a shortage of them in the human race – to pursue questions to the very end. After all, to ask "Where did the world come from?" is as natural as it is for a four-year-old to ask "Where do babies come from?", and both questions are perfectly reasonable. To answer that babies are found in cabbage-patches in France and are brought by storks in many other countries may not satisfy the curiosity of the child's searching mind; it will go on pressing: how do storks get those babies? It is the same with the Big Stork. Having been told "God created the world", curious people will keep asking: "And who created God?" They are told that God has not been created; not that he just happened not to have a creator, but that it was logically impossible for him to have been created – or that his essence involves existence. Everything else follows from this identity and we are already in trouble: what is logically necessary existence?

But we can get into the same difficulty without passing by way of the God-person and the act of creation, but by trying rather the opposite itinerary. Many people, all through the centuries, simply could not make sense of the

fact of existence without being mentally coerced, so to say, into admitting that there must be something that, in contrast to the contingent, corruptible and finite creatures we know from experience, is bound to exist, is self-explanatory and self-sufficient. The irresistible temptation to think of this "something" leads to a vexing problem: how could this something have been responsible for the creation of the universe, granted that it cannot, by definition, engage in a real, causal relationship (with anything else but itself) without annihilating its self-enclosed perfection? Platonists invented various levels of emanation in order to cope with this obstacle, but no matter how many levels they might construct, they could not do away with the basic incompatibility between the notion of the Absolute and the idea of creation; it appeared that to be incapable of having been created amounted to being incapable of creating as well. Again, from the Absolute thus conceived to a loving God-creator the path seemed to be blocked. If he is Plato's powerful demiurge, we are still in the dark about his connection with the ultimate source of being.

Readers of Plotinus know that his unspeakable One retains something of personal life: it is benevolent, it wants us to return to its all-encompassing unity. Other Platonists, both before and after Plotinus – from Speusippus to Damascius – were not prepared to make this concession. There is nothing recognizably personal in their Absolute; it cannot be called good or loving (or God) without its simplicity being destroyed. The greatest Platonist of modern times – perhaps the last great Platonist – Benedict de Spinoza, was equally consistent; his God cannot be a person in any sense, he does not care a damn about our affairs, he cannot make choices between various options, he cannot reciprocate our love. But neither could Spinoza explain, hard as he tried, how finite creatures are conceivable at all, given the indivisible unity of Substance. Briefly then: the world does not explain it-

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self. The Absolute does not explain the world. A personal God, if he explains the world, is not the Absolute.

There is, no doubt, a radical difference between asking about the origin of babies and looking for the germ of the world, because "the world" in this context is another word for "everything", and some philosophers simply forbid us to ask questions about "everything", let alone about everything's origin; they decree that the origin of everything is a non-concept. Physicists, most fortunately, have not been deterred by the philosophers' prohibition. Some of them now tell us that the universe did indeed emerge *ex nihilo*. Still, even if they admit that one cannot do without the idea of creation, it is most unlikely, even inconceivable, that they could ever - using their mathematical tools - come up with the concept of personal providence.

There are two separate aspects to human spiritual life: they are vaguely related, but by no means necessarily linked to each other. People reach the Absolute - or believe they do - as a result of their intellectual need for a logically necessary, self-supporting foundation of existence as such, of the very act of existing. There is no way they can communicate with it, and no need for such communication. They communicate with God, who protects them, provides them with rules of conduct, gives them the feeling that their lives have meaning and a hope that their misfortunes and suffering will turn out not to be in vain, all the evidence, or apparent evidence, to the contrary notwithstanding.

Most Christians do not need to bother about such questions; they pray to, worship and trust the Lord, rather than a nameless abyss about which every word uttered is bound to be wrong. Christian philosophers, however, can never be satisfied with being no more than worshippers; they search for purely intellectual understanding and they try to separate it from the act of worship. They have devised a number of strategies to cope with the problem of an

Absolute which is at the same time a person (and personal life as we know it cannot be understood without being contrasted with others' personal life). Some, like pseudo-Dionysius, aver that all statements about God have no theoretical content whatever; they are to encourage us to worship him, but they give us no knowledge, since no knowledge about God, save the negative (what he is not), is accessible. Others, like Nicholas of Cusa, argue that in thinking of God - and of Infinity of any kind, for that matter - the principle of contradiction is not applicable, unlike in the knowledge of finite entities. Still others, like Meister Eckhart, boldly try to go to the bottom (or the top) of the idea of Godhead, without fearing the paradoxical results. The masters of the schools, on the other hand, abhorred paradoxes; they elaborated the notion of a personal God who shares all the virtues of the Absolute, and, inevitably, the very logic of their thought

sucked them down into the bottomless pit of ever more unmanageable mysteries.

The God of the worshippers - as opposed to the philosophers' God - reasserted his presence on both sides of the great sixteenth-century conflict between Humanism and Reformation. This was a great relief after what many people felt had been the intellectual torture-sessions of late scholasticism. We were told again that to scrutinize the divine essence is a sterile exercise, that we should go back to the Bible and seek in it our way to salvation, that God, in his revealed word had given us enough light and enough knowledge about himself, and enough is enough; whatever is relevant to our conduct, our eternal life, is clear and within the reach of our reason, and all the dizzying speculations of theologians bring more harm than profit.

The Absolute has never ultimately been expelled from secular philosophizing, but our

own century has tended to relegate it to an area where, for that matter, it has dwelled from all eternity. The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, much as he has become questionable still there to the extent that people wish him to be there. Two quotations may be useful in this context. The first is from myself:

We urged God to withdraw from the world. This is the last request. A yawning hole has remained. We keep praying to this hole, to nothing. No answers. We are enraged. A proof of God's existence?

The second comes from the prophet Amos (8:11-12):

Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the word of the Lord: And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall wander from place to place, seeking the word of the Lord, and shall not find.

God in recent poetry

David Davie

Some time ago I saw that William Empson's *Milton* (1961, revised 1965, and yet further amplified as late as 1981) inaugurated a new era in British culture, a period in which the question of religious belief would move back - and at first imperceptibly - to a central position from which it had been displaced decades before they had been displaced, and which seemed irreversibly. To many, believers and unbelievers alike, who understood that Empson had taken *Paradise Lost* as a text for his attack against the Christian God, and therefore against Christianity in all its manifestations, it seems still, that this was a simple Lord: And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall wander from place to place, seeking the word of the Lord, and shall not find.

Empson's challenge has not yet been taken up, at any time through the last quarter-century, it is generally assumed that social theory, working through political and ideological or else (where necessary) religious divisions. There was a Benthamic Empson which believed this. But public opinion, for instance in Northern Ireland, religious circles both Christian and Jewish, has not yet vindicated Empson's undeclared assumption that social conflicts are on the one hand metaphysical, or at least are conceived to be, by the parties in conflict; and that such antagonisms can be handled and resolved only by recognizing the metaphysical dimension to the contending allegiances. Such antagonisms, the one between believer and unbeliever, however it may be muffled by the complexity of English social life (itself replete with late as only a fall prophylactic), remains the most crucial and potentially the most explosive in a nation which now includes as well as Christians, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs and Rastafarians. Already when Empson's book appeared, the preoccupation with Christian faith and the Christian Church in the poetry of W. B. Yeats and John Betjeman, R. S. Lyones and Geoffrey Hill and C. H. Sisson - all of the way to being prominent and dominant - declined in with Empson's polemic and indicated it as timely. His book and his challenge, helped to defuse the tension by at least assuming once again that a kind of some kind is what British people of whatever colour have a right to get heated about, for or against.

In the United States the situation is different, and more nebulous. If we start with William Empson, we are condemned to a certain insularity, for Empson was, in every sense, down to the deliberately unbuttoned style of his prose, a serenely insular person; and his literary criticism, though it treats him as an American, "New Criticism". (Accordingly one reads how many of the hundred Miltonists whom Dodsworth inspected were American.)

A vacuum, in discourse, as in anything else, exists only to be filled. And the supposed vacuum "God" has duly been filled by various materials, some Freudian, some Marxist, some post-structuralist, some post-modernist, some post-political. (There are, for instance, American Marxist critics; but their Marxism is thoroughly

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Translations need revision because of developments in scholarship and new discoveries which influence the understanding of particular texts. The French *Bible de Jerusalem*, to which the English *Jerusalem Bible*, originally published in 1966, was deeply indebted, appeared in a revised edition in 1973. *The New Jerusalem Bible* still relates to the French by following it in most instances where alternative interpretations of the original languages are possible. But, unlike its predecessor, it works direct from the original, using the French as a guide to scholarship rather than to translation.

It attempts a degree of uniformity - key words being normally given the same translation in all their occurrences (as in the Revised Version, useful as a crib) - though this must be regarded as a doubtful procedure since it implies a uniformity of use, of the same word in all contexts, that makes no more sense in ancient Hebrew and Greek than it does in contemporary English. It also goes rather against the very proper stress by Henry Wansbrough, OSE, the General Editor, on the avoidance of paraphrase - some contemporary English versions err very seriously in this respect, forcing one meaning on a text where doubt may well exist.

Stricter adherence to the original is designed to bring out differences and similarities in parallel texts, as in Kings/Chronicles and the first three Gospels, though the pressures of harmonization, often at work in translations, are in fact observable in the Hebrew and Greek texts as we have them preserved, so that determining distinctions is often a delicate matter of textual criticism. It is claimed for this revision that "Quotations from the Old Testament found in the New have the same form in both", a procedure which would seem to contradict the principle of accurate translation of each text where it appears. Acts 1:20 has "Reduce his encampment to ruin / and leave his tent unoccupied", where Psalms 69:25, which is being quoted, has "Reduce their encampment to ruin / and leave their tents untenanted", acknowledging that the passage in its new context requires the shift from plural to singular. But the word "tent" in Acts has no equivalent in the Greek and is an unnecessary modification of the perfectly good meaning "Let his home be deserted / with no one at all living in it". It is an important principle of inner-biblical interpretation that texts shift, and that quotation cannot be rigidly distinguished from allusion, which, perhaps, Father Wansbrough's editorial policy fails to recognize.

An attempt has been made at handling the difficult problem of "sexist" language. This is a delicate matter and sometimes it leads to awkward paraphrases and circumlocutions. It is easy to substitute "anyone" for "any man" where no restrictive sense is intended. "Brothers" as used in 1 John 3:13 and 14, is defensible in a context which stresses "love of brother" in contrast to Cain's fratricide; but the broader context shows that the same is not restrictive, though only *circumlocution* can bring out the subtlety. In 2:124, however, the literal "sisters" has been kept at its first use and "brothers" replaced by "parents" in the second, while "young men" have become "young people" at each occurrence. Texts from the ancient world cannot be supposed to have the same social context as that in which we attempt to understand them, it is not clear how far deliberate alteration of the plain meaning of an ancient text - as is sometimes advocated - will really alter human styles of thought.

The other factor affecting change has been that of readability. Twenty years of use, in Roman Catholic and other churches, has shown up, as was to be expected, some infelicities of expression. I still have my own reservations about the translators' use of Yaweh for the name of God, on grounds both of uncer-

tainty of form and of its unacceptability in some circles; but it is an insoluble problem. The changes now made will need to be tested, but reading the text one may observe the same vigour and concreteness of expression, and a strong sense of rhythm in the poetic passages. Sampling in Psalms and Job and Isaiah shows a forthrightness of language that is fitting to the conclusion of Hebrew poetry. There is a vivid contrast with the simplicity of narrative style in the parables; and another contrast with the strongly persuasive style appropriate to the epistles.

Matching this is the often modest but useful updating of the introductions to the biblical books and their better printing and subtitling. The *Jerusalem Bible* took a bold step in providing in these introductions and notes substantial and informative indications of the nature of the books and of the problems of interpretation. The new edition has removed some polemical passages - directed partly to readers for whom the critical scholarship of the last centuries still fell under the shadow of papal anxiety, an anxiety strongly felt yet in some religious circles both Christian and Jewish, but outmoded by the advance of sympathetic scholarly work. At some points, changes reflect a proper recognition that this translation is used by readers of other religious persuasions and of none, with some tinging down of Christian claims made as if they were self-evident. The gains are considerable, while the presentation remains modestly conservative.

It is only nineteen years since the original *Jerusalem Bible* was reviewed in the *TLN*. By then, it was then indicated as having only 400 pages - the pagination for Old and New Testaments had been separate. The total in fact was about fifty pages less than in this revision, the increase now being in some of the introductions - such as, interestingly, that to the Song of Songs - in the substantial extension and clearer printing of the "table of major books" which replaces a more limited index of "biblical themes in the footnotes", and the addition of a useful index of personal names. The old rather shabby maps have been replaced by clear ones - which inevitably make too many assumptions about the identification of places - and their use justified by the inclusion of a "go with them" which provides a geographic cross-reference to the text.

This revised translation, with its footnotes, makes substantial demands on the user. It is explicit in its recognition that a modern reader cannot easily bridge the centuries in language, the cultural gap and to the biblical writers. The reader is treated as an equal; it being assumed that understanding is what is wanted rather than over-simple use. No doubt there will be other editions of the text, with less detail in the notes and shorter introductions; these will need to have the same high aims, while undertaking the difficult task of conveying the problems of interpretation in simpler language, while still facilitating the direct appeal of the literature's own artistry.

"Which Translation? And How to Use It" is a chapter in Bruce Chilton's *Beginning of the Testament Study* (1966pp. SPCK. Paperback £5.95, 0 281 04210 1), recently published.

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164pp. Verso. £12.95.
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Carlo Ginzburg first discussed the "Warburg School" of art-historical interpretation in an article entitled "From A. Warburg to E. H. Gombrich: Notes on a problem of method". The "school" has become identified with the reconstructive technique of iconography, which Erwin Panofsky has defined as concerned with "conventional subject matter". In other words, iconography is implicitly distancing and contextualizing, the assumption being that the conventional "language" of images is closed to us without the labours of the iconographer. Through these labours, recognizable forms become saints, gods or allegories; apparent events become episodes from history or poetry, pointing to another world, to the uses and activities of another age.

Iconography raises problems of its own, but more serious questions arise at the next level of interpretation, which Panofsky has called "iconological". It is at this level that the past to which art belongs is most fully characterized. Panofsky never provided a satisfactory definition of "iconology", and, in his essay, Ginzburg examined the practices by which such characterizations were in fact made in art-historical interpretation. Following Gombrich, Ginzburg rejected the "physiognomic" idea that the forms of art themselves express the inwardness of the artist by whom they were made or the spirit of the age in which they were created and dismissed as arbitrary or circular the iconological methods of Edgar Wind and Panofsky. If iconography implies a lost context, the context in which Panofsky located art was made up of the traditions of intellectual, religious and cultural history, and it was at this level that he also located the deepest significance of art.

Ginzburg's preference was for another, more concrete and political notion of context, which he addresses in *The Enigma of Piero* (first published in Italy, in 1981, under the title *Indagini su Piero*). It too is an essay in art-historical method, addressed at once to more general problems and to the thicket of scholarship which has grown up around the quiet paintings of Piero della Francesca. The book is presented as a challenge to art historians, and so in certain respects it is, but it is also a synthesis and a reorientation of art-historical literature.

Ginzburg begins by arguing that there are no inherent limitations to iconographic explanation, which may proliferate merely by suggestion and the chance discovery of texts. It is possible indeed that understanding is being confirmed rather than any new understanding created. Again, economical and cogent explanations, although preferable in the absence of anything external to verify them, may be the result of a particular selection of material, and so may again be circular. In order to solve these problems, it is necessary to look beyond iconography itself to an external principle "such as commissioning". Patronage, in other words, provides what Panofsky might have called a "corrective principle" to iconographic procedure. This political-historical contextualization implicitly characterizes the period to which art belongs in ways very different from the cultural-historical results of Panofsky's iconology. At same time, the convergence between the results of iconographic "decoding" and information about "commissioning" not only allows us to select among different possible readings, the author argues, it also reduces the possibility of error "practically to nothing".

The first short essay on the "Baptism of Christ" provides an example of what these ideas mean in practice. Ginzburg admires the elegance of one of the interpretations of the painting according to which the three angels are taken to symbolize concord and to refer to the Council of Florence of 1439. We cannot be sure that this is correct, however, since, for all we know, even the angels may have been messy rather than elegant. The dilemma is solved by three other new interpretations of the painting.

the patronage of the picture. When we know that it was painted for the Camaldolite abbey of Borgo San Sepolcro, that Ambrogio Traversari was Abbot-General of the Camaldolite order and a major participant in the Council of Florence, then we are able to decide in favour of this explanation and reject others. Since Traversari died in 1439, we are also provided with an approximate date for the painting, and a problem of chronology is solved in the bargain.

The patron with whom Ginzburg is principally concerned is the Areteine humanist Giovanni Bacci Bacci, although a minor figure, moved in the highest humanist circles, and provides the fixed point around which the whole complex argument of these interlocking essays moves. Not only was he close to Traversari, he was close to Piero's patron of the 1450s, Sigismondo Malatesta, and is thought to have introduced Piero to his best-known patron, Federico da Montefeltro, the notched Duke of Urbino. Sometime after 1452, the Bacci family commissioned the *Legend of the True Cross* cycle in San Francesco in Arezzo, the change in style from the retardataire paintings in the vault to Piero's on the walls marking the transition of generations from father to humanist son — once again Giovanni — who must have recommended the young painter to his father. The same network of relations leads to Ginzburg's interpretation of Piero's much-interpreted "Flagellation". There, it is argued, Giovanni Bacci is the figure on our right in the large foreground trio, and is shown delivering cardinal's vestments to Bessarion in Constantinople in 1440. The actual flagellation of Christ in the background records Bessarion's response on that occasion and his justification of his accepting a cardinalate in the Western Church. The Eastern Christians (Christ) suffer at the hands of John VIII Palaeologus (Pilate) and the Turks. The painting was made some twenty years after the events it commemorates as part of an appeal for a new crusade, Constantinople having fallen in 1453. The haunting angel figure separating Bessarion and Bacci is identified as Buonconte da Montefeltro, illegitimate son of Federico, student of Bessarion and fair flower of Italian humanist education, cut down by the plague in 1458 at the age of seventeen.

These essays differ from earlier interpretations of Piero's painting in being grounded in a more systematic view of history, set out in other dimensions in the essay on "centre and periphery" in Italian art, which Ginzburg wrote with Enrico Castelnovo and published in 1979. There it is argued that works of art are signs of political power and that sophistication

of style is significant in its visible difference from the less developed or positively resistant styles of peripheral and subject places. As a progressive artist affiliated with major courts, Piero was closely involved with power, an involvement evident both in the circumstances in which his art was made and in its subject-matter. This view directs attention to actual personal and political relations, and it is within such a framework that historical and visual clues are utilized. Sense may be made, for example, of the *pentimenti* which slightly re-contour the skull of Giovanni Bacci by arguing that correction occurred when the patron was once again available for "matching". Although it is certainly the case that the making of works of art is enmeshed in all kinds of real circumstances, insistence on this kind of concreteness takes on a momentum of its own, and sometimes seems to convince by a kind of vividness rather than by force of argument. This together with the overall application of spare logical rules has the somewhat paradoxical effect of making arguments seem to have been proven and leads the author to suggest that questions are closed that will no doubt be debated as long as these issues continue to be of interest.

Ginzburg is concerned in this book with iconography, and also with connoisseurship and chronology as they relate to political context. Even though art historians working on Piero have also concentrated on these issues, it is not clear that everything properly art-historical is encompassed in them. For instance, like many critics of Piero's art, Ginzburg notes its "Greek" character. Quite understandably, he does not wish to explain this by appealing to "unverifiable iconological interpretations" or to "abstruse invocations" of spiritualistic forces like "those visual springs which flow forever underground", the last phrase a quotation from Roberto Longhi. He believes that Piero's penchant for things Greek should be explained instead by the "social network in which they took form". Piero's "stylistic choices" and his devising of a style that looked significantly Greek to fifteenth-century Italians and still looks Greek to us today, however, points beyond patronage (even if some choices may have been made by patrons) to other art-historical problems. Problems which are, in their own way, as real as political historical problems. What Greek art did Piero know and how did he know it? How could he see "Greekness" so clearly and essentially?

To ask such questions is not to try to reinstate "those visual springs", only to insist that such questions must be asked and that they are essential to the historical explanation of the appearance of works of art. It assumes too



"Woman with a Basket of Fruit and a Cornucopia: Abundance", by Giorgio Vasari, reproduced from Florentine Drawings of the Sixteenth Century. Nicholas Turner (272pp. British Museum Publications Ltd. £20. 0 7141 1626 2. Paperback, £12.50), the catalogue to an exhibition at the British Museum from May 22 to August 17.

much about works of art to treat them as illustrations of political events without considering that the possibility of representing these events as they were represented has its own history. The perspective and the splendid raking and reflected light of the "Flagellation", Piero's peculiar archaic and yet sophisticated classicism, the triadic figure groups of the "Baptism of Christ" and "Flagellation", which, whatever they might mean, embellish the humanist *historia*, also need historical explanation. The contribution to the discussion of Piero's art and of art-historical method made by these virtuoso studies is flawed only if it is supposed that the arguments have fully disclosed what history has to tell us about the mystery of Piero's art.

contact with El Greco's Toledo. It does so by introducing us specifically to El Greco's closest circle of associates, the men who clearly appreciated and furthered his talents and who discussed with him the fine theological points which he was to visualize in his painting.

Professor Mann concentrates on the programmes of three of El Greco's most significant commissions, each of which marked a turning point in the artist's career, and each of which Mann examines in detail. That for Santo Domingo el Antiguo, in Toledo, brought El Greco to Spain and gave him his first chance to work on a monumental scale. The grand undertaking for the Sepulchre of the Incarnation in Madrid was produced at a time when El Greco had fully evolved his mature style; its programme sought to interpret the visions and meditations of the Blessed Alonso de Orozco, whose followers campaigned to secure his canonization (he was not beatified until 1882). Finally, Mann discusses the retablos for the Hospital of Saint John the Baptist Outside the Walls, in Toledo, this was El Greco's last large-scale work, which he left unfinished on his death; its "Apocalyptic Vision" is perhaps the most "overwhelming and awesome" of El Greco's inspired paintings and fittingly closes his career. For this final work, Salazar de Mendoza, the Administrator of the Hospital, was probably the ideal patron. A church scholar and chronicler, Salazar believed in the superior perspective power of painting as against writing, and he was a devotee of El Greco's "visionary" style.

Mann's *El Greco and his Patrons* makes an important contribution to the study of El Greco's art. The biographies of the men who in various ways collaborated with the artist and helped to promote the development of his work, as well as the detailed analysis of the iconology which provided the subject-matter of his art, will surely afford interest to a much wider range of scholars in related subjects to whom this study is warmly recommended.

Geoffrey Parker

JAMES D. TRACY
The Financial Revolution in the Habsburg Netherlands: Renten and Renteniers in the County of Holland, 1515-1565
200pp. University of California Press. £29.75.
052004253

In 1580, Philip II of Spain confided to his Secretary of State for Finance: "I have never been able to get this business of loans and Renten into my head. I have never been able to understand it." The king may be forgiven by his readers of this book, for the study of sixteenth-century finance is confusing, demanding and exhausting; but it is nevertheless necessary. To a large extent Philip failed to suppress the Revolt of the Netherlands, which began in Holland in 1572, because he did not understand "this business of loans and Renten" whereas his Dutch enemies did. Spain was compelled, by her enormous short-term debt at high interest, to declare herself bankrupt in 1575, 1596, 1607, 1627 and 1647; the Dutch, however, were able to borrow, at moderate interest, a sum equivalent to twelve times the annual revenue. And they never reneged. Successful was the Dutch financial system, with long-term loans guaranteed by the public authorities, that in the 1690s it was transferred to England, where it enabled William III to withstand the superior resources of Louis XIV of France just as his grandfather William I of Orange had defied the might of Spain.

The importance of this "financial revolution" (as historians have termed it) has never been questioned; but precisely where and how it originated has remained something of a mystery. This is the problem which James D. Tracy tackles in his book, thereby offering an important new explanation for the emergence of the Dutch Republic — first as a successful state and then as a great power. For he is able to show that it was in the county of Holland, soon to be the backbone of both the Dutch Republic and the Republic, that a distinctive new form of public finance evolved in the earlier sixteenth century.

There were, according to Dr Tracy, three stages in the process. First, in 1515, agents of the central government of the Habsburg Netherlands ruled by Charles V were able to persuade the States of Holland (the powerful representative assembly of the county) to accept collective responsibility for loans (*renten*) secured on the future yield of ordinary taxes; previously each town had issued *renten* of its own, for which it alone was responsible. In 1542, the central government further

persuaded the States to vote a wide range of new taxes (including an excise duty and a new land levy), on which *renten* were to be secured, thus greatly increasing the amount of the loans raised. Finally, in 1553, the government and the States, which had previously issued *renten* at fairly low interest and therefore often had to compel wealthy citizens to invest, now raised the interest rates and abandoned compulsory sales: they were rewarded by a notable inflow of capital from voluntary investors living both inside and outside the province who regarded a publicly guaranteed life annuity at 16% per cent as highly desirable. The successful formula for floating long-term loans was now complete, and the only major changes in later years were a reduction in interest rates on the one hand, and an increase in the total borrowed on the other. "Dutch finance" was flexible, efficient and cheap.

This brief summary of Tracy's monograph does not of course do justice to the range of his material. For not only does he study the roots of the financial revolution, and traces its importance for the outcome of the Dutch Revolt; he also provides a wealth of new evidence on the 2,000 or so people who bought the *renten* and on their motives for doing so; on how the *renten* were issued and redeemed; and on how they fitted into the wider economic life of the province. It was not an easy task, for the surviving historical records of the reign of Charles V are incomplete, confusing and complex (not least because they are written in so many languages: French, Dutch, German, Italian, Spanish, Latin...). Perhaps it was inevitable, therefore, that a number of minor inaccuracies would creep into the text — although why the present reviewer's *The Army of Flanders and the Spanish Road* should be referred to throughout as "The Spanish Road and the Army of the Netherlands", or why the author of *The Financial Revolution in England* should be cited from page 1 onwards as either "P. J. Dickson" or "John Dickson" when he is really R. G. M. Dickson, is a mystery to me.

But these and other minor errors do not affect the author's main argument, or diminish his scholarly achievement. For Tracy's book is remarkable on a number of levels. First, it meets the only criterion by which (I am told) hard-nosed American academics judge successful monographs: he has covered his chosen topic in such a way that it will never need to be covered again. More important, he has found a major development in European history that had somehow escaped all previous scholarly treatment, and produced a definitive study of its genesis. Finally, and perhaps most impressive of all, Dr Tracy has managed to understand and explain a subject which baffled even Philip II.

Import — export impacts

K. N. Chaudhuri

OM PRAKASH
The Dutch East India Company and the Economy of Bengal 1630-1720
200pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press. £20.00.
069104479

On publication of Om Prakash's long-awaited book, one of the Dutch East India Company's major areas of trade will be welcomed not only by specialists interested in the history of the Dutch East India Company, but also by general students and students of Asia's commercial history before the colonial period. Om Prakash, an economic historian based at the School of Economics, has combined his knowledge of the Company's vast historical archives at the Algemeen Rijksarchief, The Hague, with many years' reflection on the political and social context of its trading operations in the Mughal India. The result is a fine, as well as the detailed analysis of the iconology which provided the subject-matter of his art, will surely afford interest to a much wider range of scholars in related subjects to whom this study is warmly recommended.

national business organization, a characteristic it shared with its rival and competitor the English East India Company. These two companies were outstandingly successful in their respective commercial spheres, though it was not until almost the end of the seventeenth century that the English organization caught up with its Continental rival in terms of the total value of trade between Asia and Europe. From their respective headquarters in Amsterdam and London, they set up semi-independent commercial enclaves from one end of the Indian Ocean to the other. Both companies supplied Europe and many intermediate markets in Asia itself (the VOC more than the English) with a wide range of eastern commodities: pepper and finer spices, such as cloves, nutmeg, mace and cinnamon, raw silk, indigo, saltpetre, tea, coffee and above all, an astonishing variety of cotton and silk textiles. Batavia, the capital of the VOC's maritime and commercial empire in Asia, would come to rival in the course of the seventeenth century the distributive role once occupied by Malacca in the transcontinental trade of Eurasia.

Bengal, the easternmost province in Mughal India, was not only the granary of those industrial areas of the Indian Ocean which were dependent on imported food; it was also a great industrial producer in its own right. In Bengal, luxury fabrics as well as everyday textiles could be woven at a cost that was all but impossible to

Caesars of the Arctic

Richard Davenport-Hines

PETER C. NEWMAN
Company of Adventurers: Volume One
413p. Viking. £14.95.
0670 803790

The Hudson Bay Company presents rare opportunities for the business and imperial historian. Chartered in 1670 with Prince Rupert of the Rhine as its first Governor, the company eventually controlled more than one-twelfth of the earth's surface, or almost 3 million square miles. Since its purchase in 1979 by Lord Thomson of Fleet for \$640 million in cash, it has been in the thrall of a dire liquidity crisis, but it remains the world's largest private firm, with sizeable interests in oil, real estate and retailing. Its archives are second only to those of the Vatican in bulk, and the historical themes and human experience offered by the company's history are of commensurate grandeur.

The late E. E. Rich's history of the first two centuries of the HBC, published in 1958-9, was a work of magisterial but inaccessible scholarship which Peter Newman aspires to complement. This first of several projected volumes covers European exploration and trading colonization of the company's territories in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Newman is a successful Canadian journalist who cherishes the role of imagination in history and is deeply susceptible to the telling human anecdote. He has an ebullient and big-hearted approach: although some of his metaphors will make British readers shudder, all but the pusillanimous will forgive these stylistic excesses from a writer of such obvious enthusiasm, good intentions and unsentimental affection for the common man.

Newman excels when writing of the company's lowest servants or of its pervasive influence on Canadian historical consciousness, but is less convincing when dealing with high politics or European merchant princes. Few books since Mrs Clifton's *Book of Talbot*, so deservedly admired by W. H. Auden, have as well conveyed the oppressive stillness of Canada's cold northern reaches. Newman is at his best when exploring the psychological isolation of the trappers and company men, the price of whose freedom he sees as cultural disinheritance and social marginality. "We were Caesars, being nobody to contradict us", said one seventeenth-century fortune-hunter; and the emotional effects of such power and such loneliness in the icy wastes north of Hudson Bay should be developed in detail in Newman's succeeding volumes.

Newman is also fascinating on sex, and

should have let his instincts run freer when writing of miscegenation, and the pathetic attempts of London directors to suppress it. His journalistic imagination, and scarcely bridled zest for the subject, make one hope that he will treat the question of Arctic sexuality at greater length and without inhibition in later volumes of the series. Many readers though, mindful of Monty Python's "Lumberjack Song", or otherwise familiar with the habits of North American males, will find Newman's exclusive preoccupation with heterosexuality both unconvincing and absurd.

He depicts the HBC's "obsessively penny-pinching" directors and senior management as believing that moderation constituted "a secular mandate on how to conduct one's life". London's attempts at social control of distant employees emerge as pitifully ineffective, although Newman's analysis of London's motives is not as searching as it might be. The atmosphere at outposts was "heavy, lumbering, lazy", punctuated by alcohol-related fires, accidents and deaths, an impression which does not altogether accord with his comparison of them to "lunar colonies" where "men had to be utterly self-reliant" and were sustained by the "defiant euphoria of sheer survival".

Despite his best efforts, Newman presents a stereotype of the London governors (of HBC) as superannuated financiers with abalone-shaped jaws and little common sense, to borrow a characteristic phrase of his, "simmered up in the lugubrious universe of upper-crust England, where a discreetly arched eyebrow could ruin a man's or a country's credit". Some of the governors certainly seem to have been third-rate businessmen and first-rate exploiters, but Newman lacks affinity with the City of London, about which he does not write with originality or adeptness. When he mentions that it took 264 years, and twenty-nine governors, before the HBC territories were visited by a governor from London (who made a brief ceremonial trip), this alienation becomes more comprehensible.

Newman is a fluent story teller with a feeling for people that overshadows his other ambitions as a historian. He deserves wide popular readership, although he will appeal most to emotional men in sedentary jobs who yearn for the outdoors and bluff male fellowship. One can well imagine such a reader breaking down over the account of a Danish expedition to find a North-West Passage in 1619-20, where the crew died slowly and agonizingly from eating undercooked polar-bear meat, leaving the captain and two others to crawl out over sixty-one decayed corpses to chew the first blades of spring grass and sail 3,500 miles back to Copenhagen. In such macabre description Newman excels.

operations in Bengal during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The political background to the Company's trading privileges in Mughal India, the system of production, the purchase of export goods, and the nature of the imports, are all discussed in detail. The statistical findings, presented in thirty-one tables, support the analysis of long-term trends and movements. However, the book is also a general attempt to examine the impact of the expanding exports of the European East India Companies on the economy of Bengal during the period in question. Om Prakash shares my view that the effect of the imports of New World and Japanese treasure into Mughal India was to stimulate output and employment through rising exports, and he presents an interesting extension and a critique of this theory in his concluding chapter.

John W. Tyler in his *Smugglers and Patriots: Boston merchants and the advent of the American revolution* (349pp. Boston: Northeastern University Press. \$25. 0 930350 76 6) examines the role of smugglers, traders and merchant princes in the revolutionary movement and argues that, although economic self-interest was not the determining cause of the revolution, "the economic needs of certain groups within the Boston merchant community reinforced some of their most deeply held beliefs concerning liberty, taxation, and colonial administration".

Amiable eccentrics

Barbara Sherrard Smith

GILLIAN AVERY
A Likely Lad
209pp. Bodley Head. Paperback, £4.50.
0 370 30712 7
PATRICIA LYNCH
The Bookshop on the Quay
186pp. Bodley Head. Paperback, £3.95.
0 370 30736 4

A year ago the Bodley Bookshelf series was launched, with the admirable aim of reprinting in attractive paperback form some of the important novels published for children in the post-war years. Like the first titles in the series, the two most recent additions should be enjoyed by readers of a new generation.

Gillian Avery dedicated *A Likely Lad*, which was first published in 1971, to her father-in-law, whose memories of a Lancashire childhood gave her much pleasure and were the inspiration for this book. His accounts form the basis of her realistic and funny descriptions of lower-middle-class life in Manchester at the end of the Victorian era. The story of how Willy Overs, the likeable hero, timid, bookish, but determined, eventually foils the plan of his affectionate but misguided father to enrol him as a clerk in the Northern Star Insurance Company, makes compelling reading.

The impression of a closely knit, loving family is vividly conveyed, as are the misunderstandings between adults and children and the tragicomic misinterpretations both make of the others' world. The plot is absorbing, but the real interest of the book is the re-creation of the atmosphere of a particular time and place. The life of Mrs Overs is dominated by worry about what the neighbours think. For Willy and his brother George, the visits to and from their only relations on "first Sundays" are a great trial, as are the frenzied preparations for days beforehand to ensure that the Overses will not fall below the standards expected by the Sowerthys who have the edge, not only because they own a piano, but because they live in a respectable suburb, in a house only attached on one side. Gillian Avery describes her characters and their surroundings with affection and humour, in a singular style, unobtrusive, economic, spiked with irony.

The Bookshop on the Quay by Patricia Lynch, first published in 1956, is also well worth reviving. It has a strong sense of place,

and the atmosphere of Dublin is convincingly evoked. St Patrick's Cathedral, the Liffey, the excitement of cattle markets, the bustle on the quay, are well observed, making credible a later foray into fantasy when the ghost of Dean Swift makes a brief appearance. Shane Madden, the young hero, is an orphan, who sets out on a quest for his uncle Tim, and it is his ensuing adventures and the people he meets, rather than his character and development, that provide interest. Tim the drover is a charismatic character. All beasts are safe with him, and for them he will "do his endeavours", but he was born with a hole in his pocket and an unshakable faith in the future rather than the more staid avuncular virtues. He is one of the many amiable eccentrics in the book, types rather than individuals, like the O'Clerys in whose bookshop Shane finds a home. The plot is full of incident, though not always plausible. The happy ending is never in doubt, and it all moves along at a great rate, buoyed up on the flood of Patricia Lynch's exuberant style.



"Aunt Nina had no children. She had no husband, either." A modern maiden aunt by Aili, from Franz Brandenburg's cheerful tale *Aunt Nina* and her Nephews and Nieces, which is now in paperback (Piccolo, £1.50, 0 330 28714 1).

Children's paperbacks in brief

Stephanie Nettell

CHRISTINE NOSTLINGER. *But Jasper Came Instead*. 120pp. Beaver. £1.50. 0 09 941940 8. First published 1982. One of this prolific Austrian writer's most successful novels, *But Jasper Came Instead* has the good fortune to be translated by Anthea Bell. The thirteen-year-old narrator has refused to go to England to improve his accent, so his mother, frantic for good grades, arranges an exchange visit: instead of the handsome, well-mannered boy they have been writing to, his stout, clumsy and almost psychotically disagreeable brother turns up. The result is a farcical nightmare until, with a skilful mood change, Nostlinger reveals the visitor's underlying misery and need for love. His life is changed by his stay but so is the family's perception of themselves. (12-15.)

MARGARET POTTER. *The Boys Who Disappeared*. 128pp. Puffin. £1.50. 0 14 031918 2. First published 1985. A story with all the ingredients of a routine formula adventure (famous surgeon, flying to India to save politician's life, takes young stepson, who helps police trace rich Indian boy running away from quarrelling parents, and is himself then kidnapped by his own "dead" father) is transformed by uncluttered writing, shrewd characterization and competent plotting into an intelligent and interesting novel. (10-13.)

GILLIAN CROSS. *The Runaway*. Illustrated by Reginald Gray. 175pp. Magnet. £1.75. 0 416 52100 2. First published 1979. When

Denny's Gran is rushed to hospital his fear of the council Home, with the bullying Bouncer Bradley, drives him to run away: the account of how he hides from the police, helped by a Sikh boy whose courage and loyalty are sorely tested, makes a satisfying story for younger readers, full of suspense while remaining believable. (9-12.)

ANN PILLING. *The Year of the Worm*. Illustrated by Ian Newsham. 142pp. Puffin. £1.50. 0 14 031821 6. First published 1984. First-former Peter Wrigley, weedy, timid, bullied, smelling of his mum's fish-and-chip shop, known - of course - as Worm, prayed for some chance to shine, be a hero, do something right for once. The school trip to the Lake District, with its strange wild scenery and new friends who do not prejudice him, gives him his chance - more frightening and more demanding than anything he had imagined. A sensitive novel that is both funny and touching. (11-13.)

BARBARA WERBA. *Times for a Small Harmony*. 160pp. Pan Horizon. £1.75. 0 330 29252 8. First published 1976. This seminal teenage novel no longer has quite the impact it had ten years ago - the path it hacked out has become well trodden - but its story of how a rich, unhappy New York tomboy comes to terms with herself still has a cutting edge. It is one of a new series which promises to offer intelligent contemporary entertainment for young adults (the publishers say twelve to sixteen-year-olds): the emphasis at the first six titles is on discovering love (and sometimes sex), but they also include Lole Duncan's supernatural thriller, *The Eyes of Karen Constant* (0 330 29248

Emma Letley

JUNE OLDHAM
Grow Up, Cupid
188pp. Kestrel. Paperback, £4.50.
0 670 81003 7
JAN MARK
Frankie's Hat
Illustrated by Quentin Blake
124pp. Kestrel. Paperback, £3.95.
0 670 81004 5

Teenage or Young Adult fiction tends either to be self-consciously relevant to the readers' supposed adolescent anxieties and/or to be distressingly patronizing. Added to this, the ideological strategies of many Young Adult books are inartistically overt. These two examples from Kestrel's new series for teenagers do not entirely avoid the problems of their genre.

Grow Up, Cupid tells the story of Mog, a likeable A level student at the Nathaniel

Chubb College of Further Education, her decision to "give up" men, her unwitting romantic involvements as she searches for material for her novel, *An Anatomy of Passion*, and her efforts to make Nathaniel Chubb a more progressive college. There is much humour in the novel, particularly in the very funny descriptions of evening classes in Creative Writing and the report of a television programme on the College. There is, too, an intelligent and sympathetic appreciation of changes in the central character's perceptions and the maturing of her attitudes. This said, however, *Grow Up, Cupid*, suffers from self-consciousness about its status as a teenage novel dealing with sexual experimentation (in the interests of authenticity for Mog's romantic novel), with feminism, and with the tentatively lesbian approach of Mog's editor from Cupid Books, Les D'Arcy. The story ends as Mog and her boyfriend Bysse decide to leave fiction behind them: "I think we can improve on Cupid Books," And they did.

Frankie's Hat, a collection of three stories with teenage heroines, is undeniably well-meaning and relevant. Frankie of the title is a very young mother. On her seventeenth birthday, she leaves her baby with her sister-in-law (her husband, Duncan, is away from home on a course), puts on her younger sister's jeans, buys an outrageous hat, joins in a football game, and finally jumps into the river to rescue the new hat. It is all a well-deserved and sympathetically presented escape from the restraints of her marriage and from a birthday distinguished, with some rather tawdry realism, by her husband's present of "a slow cooker with an odour-filter in the lid".

The emphasis on the kitchen is found, too, in the story "It Wasn't Me". Dianne Shepherd cleans the house ("char" and "charring" are taboo words) of Chloe Vernon, a divorced business woman whose home reveals "a glimpse of a kitchen of someone who did not have to clean up after herself". When Dianne has flu, her daughter Ronda goes to work for Chloe in her mother's place. The story tries to come to terms with the inequalities of the relationship between Chloe and Dianne (and Ronda), admitting that the latter two have some "insubstantial grievance" about Chloe, who is resplendent and apparently leisured in her broderie anglaise housecoat; but it is a little heavy-handed in its message; and Ronda's brief moments of fantasy do little to lift the depressing atmosphere.

cub reporter Timothy, realizes that Lisa's seductive law-and-order campaign for decency is another alien attempt to control the world - Lisa is a second Grinny. A lively sequel to that earlier SF thriller. (10-13.)

JAN MARK. *Trouble Half-Way*. Illustrated by David Parkins. 127pp. Puffin. £1.50. 0 14 031588 8. First published 1985. A study of the changing relationship between an anxious, rather proper, little girl and the stepfather with whom, in spite of his obvious affection, she is still ill at ease - together they travel across England in his lorry, discovering far more than simply how to deliver furniture. Characteristically perceptive and witty, it was joint runner-up for the Guardian Award. (11-13.)

PANLOPP LEBLEY. *A Stitch in Time*. 140pp. Puffin. £1.25. 0 14 031975 1. First published 1976. A finely written novel, meditative and subtle, with the flavour of an earlier era in children's literature - destined, now, and perhaps then too, for small girls who read a lot and savour what they read. It has a familiar lively theme: time, and the layers and echoes it leaves in passing - old possessions, clocks, fossils, shifting landscapes. There's a ghost, whose message is not quite what it seems, and some quiet humour in this story of a solitary eleven-year-old on holiday in Lyme Regis, who gains a new confidence from the past and, to her surprise, the present. (10-13.)

NICHOLAS BISK. *You Remember Me!* 152pp. Puffin. £1.50. 0 14 031556 6. First published 1984. The beautiful television personality Lisa Treasgold seems to hold the whole nation in her spell, but what is she? Nicky is supposed to be a clever only child, the daughter of a

Sales of books and manuscripts

H. R. Woudhuysen

Two items relating to the occult did particularly well in Sotheby's two-part sale on April 15 and 29 (see TLS of April 11). A mid-sixteenth-century manuscript, *Ars Artium sive Ars Magica Cabalistica*, attributed to Hartmann Schopfer, fetched £2,400 (estimate £800-£1,200), while the incunabula first printing of the *Malleus Maleficarum* in a contemporary binding reached £9,000 against a higher estimate of £5,000. Both lots were bought by a private collector. Later in the sale a copy of Bartolozzi's engravings of the Holbein pictures of Henry VIII's court went to Symmonds for £2,500 (estimate £1,500-£2,000), and a presentation copy of Jenner's third treatise on vaccination, *A Continuation of Facts and Observations*, 1800, inscribed to William Woodville, went as high as £680 to Kohler, more than doubling its higher pre-sale estimate.

Sotheby's next sale, on May 8 and 9, was of colour plate books, atlases and works on travel, natural history and science. The first 150 lots came from Berkeley Castle. The books tended to be in very good condition and still in their eighteenth and nineteenth-century bindings. The prices some of the lots fetched reflected their fine state: a beautiful set of Egeron's hand-coloured lithographs of *Views in Mexico*, 1840, went for £25,000 to Swann (estimate £8,000-£12,000), and a very rare set of W. Hallowell's *Views of the Bermudas* (c.1848) made £15,000 to Kessler against a pre-sale higher estimate of £10,000. Dr Johnson's satirical *Marmor Norfolcense*, 1739, bound in contemporary calf with eleven other political pamphlets of the time (including Horace Walpole's *The Convention Vindicated*, 1739), was bought by Quaritch for £1,800. But the quality of the books from Berkeley Castle was most strikingly shown in the prices that a series of Piranesi's works fetched. These were in general in particularly fine condition and most went over their estimates: *Le Antichità Romane*, 1756, made £15,000 (top estimate £9,000) and the *Vedute di Roma* (1750-62) fetched £13,000 (estimate £10,000-£12,000).

Among the atlases and maps a beautifully coloured and decorated copy of the 1606 English edition of Ortelius's *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* was unsold (estimate £40,000-£50,000). Two important lots, one a missionary map of California of c.1782 and the other a collection of late eighteenth-century letters relating to the early exploration of upper California, which it had been hoped might fetch together as much as £70,000, were withdrawn. A Portuguese portion (book of sailing directions), a chart of the latter half of the sixteenth-century showing parts of the Arctic regions was bought for £2,000 by Areda: this was just below its lower estimate. The surprise of the sale was, perhaps, the £40,000 Israel paid for a set of four Dutch sea charts (c.1700) of the Pacific, showing Australia and New Zealand, as well as the Cape of Good Hope, the East Indies and Japan. They had been estimated to fetch at most £15,000. None of these prices include the buyer's premium.

In their two-part sale, on May 27 and June 10, Sotheby's are offering some intriguing items. They are not of the finest quality or greatest rarity, but there is quite a lot of interest in the fairly modest catalogue: Churchill memorabilia, "a collection of his cigar bands, his black silk eyeglass used when taking naps, one of his vests and two pairs of his long underwear (sold by Austin Reed, Regent Street) with his embroidered initials", with some other items is estimated at £600-£700; "seventy banknotes from many countries signed by Howard Hughes (\$1 bill), Bob Hope and others"; "Frank" protesting that he is not "a faithful American" items feature heavily in the autograph material, with a long and almost complete series of examples of the signatures and handwriting of the Presidents of the United States. There is also a short typed letter signed by John F. Kennedy to a young woman about to undergo an operation and an autograph draft of a lecture by Ronald Reagan on higher education delivered in 1967 in London, which is expected to fetch as much as £10,000.

Among the more literary lots are many autograph and association items. Some of these offer differing views on autograph collectors. Carlyle tells one hunter to "collect knowledge, wisdom, and modest courage" instead; Kipling charges half a crown for each signature and Ian Fleming is alert to their value, saying "these precious signatures" should not be given away "for peanuts". An early letter from Disraeli to Robert Wheeler is endorsed with a contemporary description of Disraeli's having "long, coal-black curls, a bilious complexion, and a fine, but repulsive countenance", and Shaw in a good postcard does not mind how many volumes of "disparaging valuations" the late Frank Harris produced, but objects to "falsehoods as to facts" in Harris's biography of him (estimate £150-£200). Charles Darwin in a fragment of a letter expresses great anxiety about the publication of *On the Origin of Species*: "I fear, if you ever read it, that the conclusions will be abominable" (estimate (£1,000-£1,500) and J. R. R. Tolkien confesses to Naomi Mitchison in 1949 that *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Silmarillion* "are excessively long" (estimate £1,000-£1,500 - two rather sad letters by Tolkien, written in 1968 about a stay in hospital, are expected to fetch £100-£150 and £300-£350 respectively).

There are a few apparently unpublished items which are worth mentioning. Garrick writes on October 2, 1769 to the Revd Mr Kaye at Kirby about his production of *The Jubilee* (estimate £600-£800); Dickens to the actor J. P. Harley on April 30, 1844 about the Sana-torium Dinner (estimate £300-£400) and Byron to Francis Hodgson on July 18, 1815 about his imminent arrival accompanied by Captain Byron (estimate £800-£1,000). A document signed by Isaac Newton as Master of the Mint in 1701 is expected to fetch as much as £1,200. An interesting addition to the collected envelopes of Percy Bysshe Shelley can be made

with his autograph address panel to "Walter Scott Esq. &c." which, endorsed by Scott's librarian "Mr Shelley With copy of Falkenstein [sic]", evidently directed a copy of his wife's novel to Scott: it is estimated to fetch £200-£300.

Among the literary manuscripts are the early typescript draft of A. A. Milne's *When We Were Very Young* (estimate £2,000-£2,500), the heavily revised typescript draft of Graham Greene's *An Impossible Woman* (estimate £2,500-£3,000) and the heavily corrected galley proofs of Norman Mailer's *Existential Errands* (estimate £800-£1,200). More modestly, the corrected typescript of Beryl Bainbridge's *The Dressmaker* is expected to go for £200 at the most, but George MacBeth's 1960s piece *The Nazi* in an autograph first draft, two typescript versions with a carbon of one of them is put at £300-£400.

The second half of the sale contains a large collection of first editions of the works of Conrad, Henry Williamson, Belloc, Trollope and Disraeli. The last three of these come from the library of Lady Diana Cooper and several of the Belloc items are inscribed presentation copies. Lady Diana is also selling a uniformly bound set of all the books which have won the Duff Cooper Memorial Prize, which is expected to fetch £1,500-£2,000. There is also a presentation copy from Robert Browning of the fifth edition of his wife's *Aurora Leigh* to Lady William Russell, two autograph letters from William Cobbett, Gibbon's copy of Montesquieu, 1758 (estimate £400-£500), and a presentation copy of Wilfrid Seawen Blunt's Kelmscott Press *Love-lyrics and Songs of Prose*, inscribed with an acrostic poem to the Marchioness of Granby (estimate £350-£450). This, along with a first edition of *A Shropshire Lad* and a presentation copy of George Meredith's first publication, *Poems* (1851), make an impressive library.

AMONG THIS WEEK'S CONTRIBUTORS

Peter R. Ackroyd was until 1982 the Samuel Davidson Professor of Old Testament Studies at the University of London. He is the editor of the first volume of the *Cambridge History of the Bible*, 1970.

R. K. Angress is a survivor of Auschwitz. She is Professor of German at Princeton University. Her *The Early German Epigram: A study in poetry* was published in 1975.

Stephen Bann is Reader in Modern Cultural Studies at the University of Kent. His *The Clothing of Clio: A study of the representation of history in nineteenth-century Britain and France* was published in 1984.

Anthony Beever's most recent novel is *The Faustian Pact*, 1983.

Kelth Brown is Professor of English at the University of Oslo.

K. N. Chaudhuri's most recent book, *Trade and Civilization in the Indian Ocean: An economic history from the rise of Islam to 1750*, will be reviewed in a forthcoming issue of the TLS.

Peter Clarke is Fellow of St John's College, Cambridge. His *Liberals and Social Democrats*, 1981, is now available in paperback.

Jim Cree's *Novel in Seven Parts* will be published this autumn.

Maurice Cranston is Emeritus Professor of Political Science at the London School of Economics. At present he is Visiting Professor of Political Science at the University of California, San Diego. His *Jean-Jacques: The early life and work of Jean-Jacques Rousseau 1712-1734* was published in 1983.

R. P. T. Davenport-Blaes was joint winner of the Wolfson Literary Prize for History and Biography for his *Dudley Docker: The life and times of a trade warrior*, 1985.

Donald Davis is Andrew W. Mellon Professor of Humanities at Vanderbilt University. He is the editor of *The New Oxford Book of Christian Verse*, 1981.

Sir Raymond Firth is Emeritus Professor of Anthropology at the University of London. His books include *Rank and Religion in Tikopia*, 1970, and *Symbols Public and Private*, 1973.

A. David Jones is a lecturer in Psychology at the London School of Economics.

Leszek Kolakowski's most recent book is *Bergson*, 1985, in the Past Masters series. His *Religion* was published in 1982.

R. D. Laing's *Wisdom, Madness and Polly: The making of a psychiatrist* was published last year.

John Macquarrie is Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity at the University of Oxford. His books include *Thinking about God*, 1975. His *Gifford Lectures, In Search of Deity*, were published in 1984.

Geoffrey Parker is Professor of Early Modern History at the University of St Andrews. His books include *The Dutch Revolt*, 1977, and *The Thirty Years' War*, which was published last year.

Sir Brian Pippard was until recently Cavendish Professor of Physics at the University of Cambridge. He is the author of *The Physics of Vibration*, 1978 and 1982.

John Pitcher is editing *Cymbeline* for the New Penguin Shakespeare.

Sidney Pollard is Professor of Economic History at the University of Bielefeld, West Germany. He is the author of *Peaceful Conquest: The industrialization of Europe 1760-1790*, 1981, and *The Wasting of the British Economy*, 1982.

Roger Scruton is Professor of Aesthetics at Birkbeck College, University of London, and a columnist for *The Times*. He is the author of *From Descartes to Wittgenstein: A short history of modern philosophy*, 1981, and of *Sexual Desire*, published earlier this year.

A. J. Sherman was formerly associated with Kuhn, Loeb and Co. He is co-author, with Edward Rosenbaum, of *M. M. Warburg and Co. 1798-1938: Merchant bankers of Hamburg*, 1979.

George Steiner's novel *The Portage to San Cristobal of A. H.* was published in 1981. His *Antigones* appeared in 1984.

David Summers is the author of *Michelangelo and the Language of Art*, 1982. His *Judgment of Sense: Renaissance naturalism and the rise of aesthetics* will be published later this year.

F. M. L. Thompson is Director of the Institute of Historical Research and Professor of History at the University of London. He is the author of *Houses in European Economic History: A preliminary survey*, 1983.

Charles Townshend is Professor of Modern History at the University of Keele. His most recent book, *Britain's Civil War: Counter-insurgency in the twentieth century*, will be reviewed in a forthcoming issue of the TLS.

Philip Trounman is the author of *El Greco*, 1967, and editor of *Alberto Durero: Sketchbook of his journey to Nuremberg*, 1970. His *El Greco: A study in his art* was published in 1975.

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The Ehrenpreis Center for Swift Studies, named after the leading Swift scholar, is being established at the Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität at Münster. It is based on library material and papers given by deed of the estate of the late Irvin Ehrenpreis, and on compilations and purchases by Hermann J. Real and Heinz J. Vinken, who have also founded a Society of Friends of the Center and are projecting a journal, *Swift Studies: The annual of the Ehrenpreis Center*; the first issue will be published this December and will report on the Society's activities and the holdings of the Center, and include essays and notes by many scholars. The annual subscription to the Friends, to include a free copy of *Swift Studies*, is the equivalent of DM60. Those interested should contact Professor Hermann J. Real and Dr Heinz J. Vinken, Englisches Seminar, Johannisstrasse 12-20, 4400 Münster, Federal Republic of Germany.

The latest in the University of Kentucky Libraries series of Occasional Papers is by John T. Shawcross. In *The Collection of the Works of John Milton and Miltoniana in the Margaret I. King Library* (113pp. University of Kentucky Libraries, KY 40506. \$15. 0 917 51903 5). Professor Shawcross describes over six hundred works, including virtually all Milton's books published in his lifetime and an extensive selection of later Miltonic literature. To most earlier, Shawcross has added annotations to indicate the importance or relevance of the work.